Spaces of Faith Activism in the Global North?: An Exploration of Religious Resistance to Current Notions of 'Progress' in the Case of KAIROS

by

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Abstract

Drawing on theories of critical postmodernism and social constructionism, this paper aims to unpack the incomplete and unhelpful meta-narratives of religion that are prevalent today even within the post-modern turn. Through an exploration of the lived experiences of communities and members of the faith-based organization KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, this study provides an entry point to investigate how some religious and faith spaces are responding to burgeoning global challenges through resistance and activism. By examining meanings and interactions which underpin discourses of religion and modernity, community, faith and resistance, a diverse map is drawn which alludes to the complexity of religious expression in the contemporary world that is presently unacknowledged. As the terrain and understanding of religion changes through dominant narratives of secularization and fundamentalism, religious and faith spaces are also responding and constructing identities accordingly. This research demonstrates how KAIROS situates itself within these shifting notions and thus how they articulate and construct their space of resistance. This paper argues that faith communities can offer an environment that allows for people of faith, as their identities shift with local and global challenges (perceived and real), to find meaning in their experiences and collectively engage in resisting dominant cultural narratives. Furthermore, in studying spaces of faith activism in the Global North, the research fills some important literature gaps. By providing a more textured dialogue among religion, modernity and post modernity, this study specifically challenges the abovementioned assumptions as they manifest in development studies literature and subsequently emphasizes the notion of 'centering' development. As individuals increasingly perceive their world as volatile, faith communities can provide needed spaces in which individuals and communities navigate their identities as activists, people of faith, Canadians, and global citizens.

List of Abbreviations Used

AKT: Another Kind of Time

BTS: Breaking the Silence Network

EFC: Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

CEJI: Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative

CST: Critical Social Theory

ECEJ: Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice

FTAA: Free Trade Agreement of the Americas

GATT: General Agreement on Trades and Tariffs

IMF: International Monetary Fund

KAIROS: KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives

NGO: Non-governmental Organization

NLT: Northern Liberation Theology

PRSPs: Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers

UNCTAD III: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

WB: World Bank

WCC: World Council of Churches

WFDD: World Faiths Development Dialogue

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CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION

We are all familiar with the images of 'religion' that dominate the collective cultural consciousness of Western societies, particularly in the aftermath of 9/11. While news headlines most frequently contain references to Islamic extremism, there is also evidence of the adoption of wider narratives that emphasis religious fanaticism. The 2006 documentary, *Jesus Camp*, exemplifies this growing trend through its depiction of an Evangelical Christian summer camp for children in the United States. Even though direct narration is absent in the film (an attempt at an unbiased portrayal), the picture which is communicated to the viewer is that Evangelical Christians are brainwashing their children into fundamentalist militants for Jesus. Portions of this film could be construed as illustrating these children in a way that parallels commonly encountered images of terrorist madrasahs[1] in the Middle East. To demonstrate just how widely this perspective is spreading, YouTube[2] presently has over 2,000 videos (each viewed 8,000 times or more) posted on *Jesus Camp* with corresponding discussion boards. The camp itself has closed down due to vandalism, hate mail, and threats.

In Western societies where dialogue around religion has been absent from the public sphere for some time, it is problematic to say the least, that these are the most accessible stories present today. Most importantly it begs the question: what is being left out of these narratives and ultimately what does this silence say about religion?

A recent edition of the Buddhist Publication, *The Shambhala Sun*, engaged this curiosity in an article on the recent explosion of atheist or 'bright' literature. Many of these authors, with good intentions, have set out to deprecate fundamentalism but as Rev. Hardies astutely remarks: "What disappoints me most about [some of these writers] is that while they set out to denounce religious fundamentalism, they unwittingly play right

[1] Madrasah is the Arabic word for any type of school, secular or religious (of any religion). The common English usage of the word madrasah has been taken to refer to an Islamic religious school.
[2] Created in February 2005, YouTube is a video sharing website where users can upload, view and share video clips.

into fundamentalism's hands by buying into its definition of what legitimate religion is" (Boyce, 2008, p. 51). Rigid belief systems have long been the cause of conflict and strife but reflexivity needs to be encouraged around the role that narratives can play in its perpetuation. This Western fixation on religious extremism in pop culture, books,[3] media, dinner conversation and even academia that so definitively colours our world, needs to be widened.

While fundamentalism is not the only metadiscourse of religion that exists today, it is certainly the most entertaining and seductive. The belief in the decline of religion in a secular age is an even more pervasive lens of analysis, at least when applied to 'modern', 'progressive' societies in the Global North. The perceived Evangelical rise is a perplexing addition to this general decline which leaves many who adhere to this secularization thesis, as Reginald Bibby states, "frustrated" (2004). Thus it seems as though we are caught in a paradox of sorts. On the one hand there is a general sentiment that seeks to legitimize the decline of religion as modernity ensues, and on the other, a growing fascination with religious extremism.

In light of this, and without dismissing the ways in which religion is serving to enhance and support present structures of domination and oppression, opportunities for a more textured understanding of religion, faith and spirituality need to be created.[4] This study endeavors to interject one facet of these dormant narratives of Western society through the exploration of a faith community engaging in resistance to neoliberal driven globalization, primarily through solidarity work in the Global North and Global South.[5] Thus, by drawing on theories of critical postmodernism and social constructionism, this paper aims to unpack the incomplete and unhelpful meta-narratives of religion that are prevalent today even within the postmodern turn. Through an exploration of the lived

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[3] *Chapters*, a well-known chain bookstore in Canada, usually have a table of recent publications on religion and spirituality positioned at the entrance to the store. Intentionally visiting three different locations I noted some consistent trends (2 in Calgary, AB and 1 in Halifax, NS). In Halifax, out of 30 books on the table, over 25 addressed fundamentalism and religious extremism. These findings were supported by the 2 Calgary locations in which over 75% of the books on the table were of similar topics.

[4] The terms, "faith," "religion" and "spirituality" are used throughout the thesis in their broadest most popular sense.

[5] The "Global North" and "Global South" are used here to delineate between the so-called "developed" and "developing" worlds, other terms used are "minority world" and "majority worlds". All remain contested and considered reductionist within the field of development studies. For clarity, "North" and "South" will be utilized in this study, recognizing that the "South" also exists in the "North" and vice versa.

experiences of communities and members of the faith-based organization KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives (KAIROS), this study provides an entry point to investigate how some religious and faith spaces are responding to burgeoning global challenges through resistance and activism. By examining meanings and interactions which underpin discourses of religion and modernity, community, faith and resistance, a diverse map is drawn which depicts the complexity of religious expression in the contemporary world, a complexity that is presently unacknowledged. As the terrain and understanding of religion changes through dominant narratives of secularization and fundamentalism, religious and faith spaces are also responding and constructing identities accordingly. This research demonstrates how KAIROS situates itself within these shifting notions and thus how its members articulate and construct their space of resistance. This paper argues that faith communities can offer an environment that allows people of faith, as their identities shift with local and global challenges (both perceived and real), to find meaning in their experiences and collectively to engage in resisting dominant cultural narratives. Furthermore, in studying spaces of faith activism in the Global North, the research fills some important literature gaps by providing a more textured dialogue among religion, modernity and postmodernity. In addition, it challenges these assumptions as they manifest in development studies literature with an emphasis on reconceptualizing and 'centering' the notion of development. As individuals increasingly perceive their world as volatile, faith communities can provide needed spaces in which individuals and communities navigate their identities as activists, people of faith, Canadians, and global citizens.

One does not have to search far within Christianity[6] for examples of similar faith expressions which have also resisted systems of inequality or been instrumental in positive social change. To briefly contextualize, the second half of the twentieth century witnessed the Civil Rights Movement partially led by Martin Luther King Jr. as well as the collapse of South African apartheid and the work of individuals like Archbishop Desmond Tutu. It is important to note here that in addition, this paper seeks to situate

[6] The term "Christianity" will be used in the study acknowledging that a multiplicity of Christianities exist both within institutional forms and expressions of faith.

Christianities within full acknowledgment of dimensions of resistance that exist in other major faiths and spiritual worldviews.

Therefore, given the aims of this study in unearthing the complex realities of religion, faith and resistance in the lives of communities and individuals, particularly in the North, I investigate the following questions: How does KAIROS situate itself within local and global trends? How does it articulate its role within the processes of neoliberal globalization and development? How do its communities and individual members situate themselves in relation to current perceptions of religion? How are notions of faith, activism and community contextualized, constructed and negotiated in the lives of individuals? And finally, in a world that is increasingly articulated as economically, socially, culturally and environmentally insecure, how can the narratives gleaned from this study help us to further conceptualize and enrich ongoing debates among modernity, faith and notions of resistance?

From the onset, this study has some seemingly glaring limitations. Can it address general trends? Why offer an anecdotal example of Christianity in its minority form that is far from the trends in religion we are seeing today? To this I answer, the world does not need a continuous development of binaries, opposites and dichotomies that define the 'other'. We are increasingly globally connected and the need to understand and engage with curiosity the variety of ways in which faith shapes peoples lives and the choices they make should be pursued. This study is just one attempt at offering some insight to further highlight ambiguities and contradictions.

1.1 Organization of Chapters

The remainder of the introductory chapter describes the conceptual framework that is critical for the theoretical argument employed. It begins by outlining the postmodern critical perspective utilized, concluding with a specific discussion around critical postmodern theory and religion. In sum, I suggest that postmodern forms of analysis need to be reworked when applied to the study of religion in order to avoid residual modernistic tendencies.

Chapter Two begins by mapping out the body of literature used to frame both the theoretical argument constructed and the case study. I commence with a brief discussion

of terminology, advance to a dialogue around religion and modernity and then illustrate how this interface manifests in international development studies. I also provide a brief overview of religion in global civil society in order to more directly contextualize the case study of KAIROS. Throughout this foundational discussion situating the research question, I highlight the gaps in literature that are particularly relevant to the study. In addition, a discussion of the methodology used (narrative analysis and grounded theory) is located at the end of the chapter. This is coupled with an in-depth description of the research process as well as the limitations encountered.

Chapter Three provides an overview of the context in which KAIROS has emerged, linking both global and local landscapes. It also highlights various ideas within Northern Liberation Theology in an effort to include theological work in the discussion.

Chapter Four outlines the findings that emerged from the case study of KAIROS, situating it within the broader trends of globalization and a wider religious terrain. Through a constructed narrative, the rhetorical framing of the organization is presented as well as its subsequent developing conceptual architecture, finally leading to a discussion around movement culture and the experiences of individual members.

The concluding chapter ties together the common themes and in particular brings the theoretical argument into dialogue with the case study for further clarification. It identifies the key aims of the research and addresses further limitations that were encountered. Ultimately it provides recommendations for future research and potential implications for the field of international development studies.

1.2 Conceptual Framework

As this study seeks to deconstruct present metadiscourses on a variety of levels, an in-depth discussion of theory is both necessary and helpful. In emphasizing a postmodern analysis in relation to the study of religion, postmodernism will be explored accordingly. In doing so, this section outlines the range of macro-narratives or theories which lend colour and direction to this study. Postmodernism as an extension of modernity will be outlined and defined in order to identity *which* aspects of postmodernism inform the thesis. This will be followed by a brief discussion of critical social theory (CST) and the relationship that it has developed with postmodernism. A

discussion of the study of religion in relation to postmodern theory contextualizes the choice of theoretical lens primarily emphasizing social constructionism.

1.2.1 A Postmodern Critical Perspective

'Postmodern' is a term excessively draped over almost anything trendy in today's Western world. Nevertheless, postmodern social theory should be acknowledged as a serious contribution to theorizing and deconstructive analysis. With modernity loosing its luster, as evident in the burgeoning climate crisis, the spread of HIV/AIDS, the volatility of the global markets, and the widening gap between the rich and poor, it is not hard to make a case for a crisis in modernity. As it becomes brutally clear that modernity has come with a high price tag, new modes of social analysis such as postmodernist theory are desperately needed in order to make sense of the present and future.

Defining postmodernism is a hefty task considering that its adherents often refrain from any generalized or universal understanding of it. One particularly safe characteristic to comment upon is that postmodernism(s) must be contextualized as a rebellion to Enlightenment thought and the narrative of modernity. Specifically, postmodernism is a reaction to the normative ideas of what encompasses a homogenized, modern world as described by Lyotard (1984), Derrida (1967), and Foucault (1972 & 1980). What all of these writers share is a deep mistrust of progress as defined by the Western world. Instead, they critique the advances of modernity and what they see as the myth of progress by expressing both its insufficiencies and opportunities. They have a profound skepticism of modernism, and in particular, capitalism in its local and global forms. Most importantly, as Agger (2006) states, "they do not regard progress as inevitable, and most certainly not as a movement centrifugally outward from the United States to more primitive global societies" (p. 38). This highlights how critiques of power within the grand narrative of modernity are integral to a postmodern analysis.

Since its emergence, postmodernist thought seems to have acquired a bad reputation not only among positivist scholars in the 'hard' sciences but also among some of the more traditional social scientists. Much of this is due to how it challenges the methods and assumptions that shape the world of academia, particularly regarding its position in the creation and maintenance of the totalitarian narrative of modernity. Like any

approach, it has its limitations with the study of religion in particular providing an apt example that can be extended to other areas of study. Yet, it cannot be denied that postmodernist elements and influences are rippling throughout disciplines, even if in subtle ways.

Criticisms of postmodernism generally revolve around a number of central arguments. Rorty (1989) outlines these in his work *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity* which claims that postmodernism is excessively relativist, marked by a refusal to take sides, neglects objective truth, and is above all antirational and antiscience. It is often interpreted as a direct attack on the values of Western liberalism and tends to elicit blanket responses that exclude a nuanced discussion of its contributions.

Many of these criticisms can be addressed by exploring how a particular expression of postmodernism is defined in relation to modernity. While radical scholars argue that postmodernity is a clean break from modernity, the more common, yet less referenced understanding, is that postmodernity, like its prefix indicates, is a continuation. In this vein, postmodernism strives to look at the insufficiencies and opportunities of modernity. In reformulating it, a place has been constructed allowing for the existence of multiple modernities, some of which do not conform to present expectations of modernity.

The accusation of relativism is a fair attack and one that should be addressed in any postmodernist analysis. Followed to its logical end, a pure postmodernist approach could celebrate the diversity of narratives and voices to the point of disregarding the residency of power and oppression. Avoiding any declaration of dichotomies such as right and wrong, good and bad, or notions of Truth, can lead to what many have criticized as a lens that does not take sides and fails to address social ills. Like any theoretical approach, this illustrates that postmodernism has pitfalls which must be carefully navigated. In response, Jameson (1991), a scholar often cited as an example of a postmodernist who advocates social change, has argued in *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* that postmodernism has the capacity to address social ills. Many within this discourse argue that previous social analysis advocating change inadequately frame current social questions, in particular Marxist and liberal analysis which operate within the narrative of modernity. But, it is important to stress that a postmodern approach does

not necessarily rely on the exclusion of these previous modes of analysis. As Agger summarizes:

> To theorize postmodernity, to view it as a distinctive stage of social history at once continuous and discontinuous with modernity (or, better said, with modernit*ies,* for there are many) does not require the theorist to abandon social criticism, Marxism, liberalism, democracy, values, distinctions, science, reason, clear writing! Although one can point to postmodernists and postmodernisms that abandon some or all of these things, especially clear writing, these are exceptions to the general rule that postmodern theory is a serious contribution to critical social and cultural theory today that grapples with phenomena simply unexplained by traditional modernist social theories. (2006, p.43-44)

This thesis relies on the flexibility and inclusivity of postmodernism as expressed by Agger in particular with reference to social critical theory.

Typically, critical social theory (CST) is regarded as primarily an offshoot of Marxism and the Frankfurt School but can also be more broadly understood as a theory cluster (Agger, 2006). Within this cluster, forms of postmodernism that mount challenges to existing social systems blend CST with postmodernist leanings to reinvigorate the ideal of radical social change to offer a more comprehensive analysis of contemporary society. This development offers a response to criticisms of CST that declare Marx "dead" and CST as no longer relevant while also balancing the wilder side of postmodernism. CST is generally distinguishable through its opposition of positivism, seeing the past and present characterized by structural domination, exploitation and oppression, and its aim of connecting everyday life with larger social structures through the exploration of structure and agency (Crossley, 2005). Postmodernism and some aspects of CST have in common the emphasis on the discursive nature of knowledge which stresses the historicity of both knowledge and science, the deconstruction of laws of capitalism, patriarchy, racism, and the domination of nature (although CST does this within a modernist framework). But where postmodernism departs from CST, Baudrillard (1983) argues, is in its reduction of the utopian visions of Marx through stressing the existence of multiple narratives or simulations, rather than the metanarrative

of a triumphant socialist structure of society formulated on the trajectory of capitalism. Thus it is the shared critique of capitalism and the assumption that it will cure all social ills that remains the point of departure for the blending of CST and postmodernism to reinvigorate and revamp both theories; thereby helping to shed light on the multifaceted realities of modernity.

1.2.2 Critical Postmodernism and the Study of Religion: An Exercise in Application

In the spirit of taking postmodernist thought seriously as a cultural and intellectual development that enhances traditional CST approaches, this study draws on the perceived strengths of postmodernist thought specifically regarding the intentional dismantling of modernity and its coinciding grand meta-narratives. It endeavors to utilize postmodernism as a version of critical social theory that furthers the critique of positivist assumptions both in theory and methodology. How this can apply to study of religion poses other questions.

Religion is often treated the same way as gender and culture, which have become 'add on' issues. Often religion is subsumed under the culture category without even the privilege of its own heading. This illustrates the general neglect of religion as a relevant issue to be studied, at least within secular western academia. Yet it should be noted that within the study of theology, postmodernism is carving out a place. Vanhoozer's (2003) *Post Modern Theology* outlines a variety of schools in which theologians defined themselves as postmodernists and remarks that "postmodernism is crucial for theology" (p.1). The preface begins by suggesting that even forms of theology that have not traditionally characterized themselves as postmodern have nevertheless been influenced. Specifically relevant for this thesis is the impact that postmodern theology is having on classical forms of liberation theology. Earlier forms of liberationist work, such as preferential option for the poor, often inadvertently totalized people experiencing poverty. Postmodern discourse on difference seeks to redefine the subaltern beyond the reductionism which can conceal important kinds of multiplicities. To illustrate this, and contrary to the claim that postmodernism and theology cannot coincide, Gustavo Gutiérrez argues that postmodernism does not negate preferential option for the poor but

rather "if anything, [it intensifies] the obligation upon theologians to respond to the diversity of the poor, to grasp the causal processes of impoverishment, and to live out their response as a spiritual pursuit" (quoted in Irvine, 2005, p.581).

Shifting disciplinary spheres, the winds are starting to change within secular academia and many cite the reemergence of religion in academic study as due to postmodern developments however indirectly a consequence (Hinnells, 2006). Sociology effectively destroyed the relevancy of religion in typical metanarrative fashion when the popular growth of secularization theory labeled it null and void (see discussion of secularization in Chapter 2). Now with postmodernism spurring the dismantling of modernity, religion and faith are surfacing once again but not without difficulties for scholars attempting to navigate the field.

Postmodernism poses some difficult problem for religious belief. One of the most lauded postmodernists, Derrida (1976) can be interpreted as a source of some of this difficulty. In *Of Grammatology*, he states: *"Il n'y a pas d'hors texte"* (there is nothing outside of the text), which places the language of religious studies under threat. Everything is whittled down to difference for Derrida and therefore any interpretation is a good as any other. In this vein, some radical postmodernists take the value of respect of the 'Other' as meaning that the 'Other' "should not be explained, decoded, classified, defined compare, translated – by way of supposedly superior transcultural terminology, knowledge or theory – or even studied at all" (Hinnells, 2005, p.269). The logical end result of freedom to be different therefore is to leave the 'Other' completely alone. The implications of this approach are highly problematic for a number of reasons where religion and faith are concerned. The belief that, with the advent of modernity, secularization will expand into the personal sphere decreasing the relevancy of religion is increasingly suspect. In the era of unprecedented globalization, interconnectivity and a common concerns, leaving the 'other' alone out of respect will most likely lead only to misunderstandings and a further destructive divide of 'us' and 'them'. Taking the approach of everything leading to difference further, religions then cannot be compared, and correlations and categorizing of religious functions cannot occur. This proves problematic when the study of religion is rooted in the encounter with the proverbial 'other'. While this form of postmodern radicalization and hyper liberalization leads to a

valorization of freedom and difference, respecting all diversity should not mean respecting all others without discernment, especially when issues of justice and human rights are involved.

However, less radical forms of postmodernism can enhance discussions about religion. A useful breakdown for this study is provided by Hinnells (2000). He attempts to bridge the modern-postmodern spectrum within the study of religion. A disclaimer must be included because, as Hinnells warns, creating a list of defined rules runs the risk of appearing too simplistic. Nevertheless some of the characteristics of many postmodern studies of religion, primarily out of Peter Berger's approach of social constructivism may be listed as:

> (i) the rejection of grand meta-narratives, (ii) each scholar's awareness of their own 'situated' position, (iii) the move away from the exclusive dependence on the official textual traditions [macronarration] to the practices associated with the home and daily life [micronarration]; (iv) the conviction that there is no such thing as 'true', objective, scientific History, there are only discourse about history... (p.1).

So it is within this myriad of conceptual ingredients that this study is located - but not without a dash of caution. One of its foundational arguments seeks to further postmodernist approaches around religion sparked by a 2005 article by Jane Sampson entitled "The Problem of Colonialism in the Western Historiography of Christian Missions." Sampson gives an honestly scathing but highly useful analysis not only of the problematic modernistic elements that are plaguing the study of religion, but also of how postmodernism has done very little to challenge them. Sampson argues that despite the radical claims by postcolonial and postmodernist scholars, a more nuanced discussion of religion has not been introduced. She remarks that for the most part, traditional preoccupations and narratives have been reinforced under new guises. According to Sampson "new fields of investigation, such as discourse analysis, use new formulations of academic authority to endorses a familiar process: the unmasking of Christianization as colonization" (p.4). In other words, postmodern forms of analysis can often be used for the same modernistic ends – a neglect of the varied and vast terrain of religion that exists beyond forms of oppression and harmful missionary conquests. This could even include

an uncomfortable mixture of both positive and negative themes in any given context, muddying the waters further. Situated within these critiques, this study is an attempt to approach the study of religion with the sensitivity and uncertainty called for by Sampson.

CHAPTER TWO:

LOCATING 'RELIGION' IN MODERNITY

"Before too long, the turn-of-the-millennium neglect of religious factors may come to be seem as comically myopic, on par with a review of the eighteenth century that managed to miss the French Revolution."
(Jenkins, 2002, p.1)

Apart from religious studies departments and theological colleges, any current study of religion has been veritably muted in Northern academic discourse. Arguably, much of this is due to the dominance of modernization theory and subsequently, secularization theories that have permeated Western societies and the academy. Within these partnered paradigms rooted in Enlightenment thinking, the specific role of religion has been marginalized on account of the belief that it will eventually become irrelevant as progress prevails (Berger 1999; Juergensmeyer 2005; Marshall 2001 & 2005; Selinger 2004). This highlights why one of the most unexpected trends at the end of the twentieth century is the global resurgence of religious ideas and religious social movements. As Scott Thomas notes: "This is a global phenomenon since it is taking place at the same time, among diverse cultures, in different countries, and in states at different levels of economic development" (p. 289).

Despite this resurgence, on the rare occasion that religion is addressed it is often mired in a deeply problematic approach. The foundational premise of secularization theory which views religion as 'backward' and 'traditional'- read: anti-modern - is the dominant lens applied to the study of religion. Although postmodern thought is loosening the grip of rigid, modern analysis, Jane Sampson (as indicated in Chapter 1) points out that the ever present modernistic lens still resides in less obvious ways when applied to the study of religion, even when buried under seemingly unbiased postmodern disguises.

I approach this study with a formal background in both the fields of religious studies and development studies (both multidisciplinary fields, and both heavily influenced by the modernity paradigm). My perspective is shaped heavily by the critique of development studies which strives to encourage the inclusion of religion where it is

presently absent. This assessment is coupled with the aim of coaxing a more nuanced discussion of religion in all of its gritty complexity within the development field.

Thus, writing from within development studies, my agenda aims to directly contribute to and engage development studies literature rather than religious studies literature. Due to this framing I will explore only selective literature which addresses the interface between religion and modernity in order to structure the discussion around religion, development and global civil society. The emphasis will be on resistance. These bodies of literature are the most appropriate in contextualizing the focus of this study. Indirectly, these discussions will also provide a more focused illustration of the larger problems with which modernity has plagued the study of religion. An exploration of the key concepts, 'religion' and 'development', will ground the discussion of the literature being consulted.

2.1 Definitions: Theorizing Religion and Development

Outlining both religion and development is challenging as each is an elusive and continuously contested term. This section provides a preliminary understanding of the concepts and more clearly outlines where this thesis is situated within the debates.

Due to the ever changing face of international development and its corresponding literature, articulating one's position amidst the flurry of ideas is an important task to undertake in any development oriented research. As a relatively new expression of modernity, the origins of development are more easily traced then that of religion. This does not necessarily aid in the construction of a succinct definition however.

From its earliest roots within the post-WWII era up to the present day, the concept of development is constantly being reframed. One definition is provided by Jan Nederveen Pieterse (2001) in his book, *Development Theory: Deconstructions/Reconstructions.* He states: "We can probably define development as the organized intervention in collective affairs according to a standard of improvement" (p. 3). While useful in helping redirect the notion of development into more neutral territory, this definition fails to acknowledge the power that lies within dominant development discourse and thus, its ability to shape the form of development that is most often adhered to.

Historically, economics has dominated the development agenda. W.W. Rostow (1960) outlined this traditional understanding of development in his monumental work *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non Communist Manifesto.* His argument for development is clearly based on a linear trajectory of economic growth; one which would ultimately culminate in mass consumption.

While still supporting the end goal of economic growth, critiques from the Global South provided scathing assessments of this development model. Dependency theorists argue that successful development in the North relies on intentionally creating and maintaining underdevelopment in the South. Originating in Latin America, this form of analysis became an intellectual movement known as *depedencia.*[7] Despite its popularity, dependency theory has only marginally influenced mainstream development rhetoric and practice.

Post-development analysis diverges from modernization theory and dependency theory in that it rejects the entire project of development. For Arturo Escobar (1995), development has achieved "the status of a certainty in the social imaginary" and that "reality, in sum [has] been colonized by the development discourse" (p.5). Proposals of postmodernism have provided the opportunity to deconstruct development in this manner. Yet Pieterse (2001), while outlining strengths, astutely remarks that any coherence around feasible alternatives from post-development has yet to be offered.

What post-development thinking provokes is an exploration of development assumptions and the myths of modernity that have become all too concrete. Reflecting on this, Gilbert Rist (2002) argues that in fact, "development is the new religion of the West". This contentious comment reflects the virtual sacredness of development doctrine as the non-negotiable path to progress. While theory and policy act as scripture, even development in practice has a seemingly religious dimension. Today's development workers are new forms of missionaries who 'save the world' but drop the 'God' language. Owen Willis (2005) contributes to this discussion by offering that the parallels between religion and development are very close, even if Rist's claim is too radical for most to fully digest.

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[7] For an in-depth discussion of modernization and dependency theories applied to development see John Isbister (2002) "Explanations of Underdevelopment" in *Promises Not Kept.* West Hartford, Connecticut: Kumarian Press.

Building on the process of reframing development, a recent reassertion of old ideas is provided by Farokh Afshar (2005) in his article "Exploring the Frontiers of International Development: Countries of the North, Well-Being, Spirituality, and Contemplation". He describes three old 'frontiers' in development that have been neglected and argues for their integration into the field. First, and most importantly in the context of this thesis, he argues for the "centering of development". This requires that the scope of development studies should broaden to include looking at the North. In essence, this type of analysis would look at the underdevelopment of the South contextualized within the overdevelopment of the North and the multiplicity of these realities in both the North and South. Bringing the North back in, Afshar states, allows for us "to explicitly commit to human and ecological development with a special concern for the vulnerable in both North and South. This concern with development is then no longer seen as 'for the good of the South', but also 'for the good of the North' and for our intertwined pasts, presents, and futures" (p.529).

Afshar also provides a number of opportunities for religion and spirituality to enter the discussion. He reiterates the recently emerging position that advocates moving beyond material growth indicators to well-being and happiness in the 'measuring' of development. Without romanticizing poverty, notions of well-being as a multidimensional phenomenon which includes non-material dimensions should be sought. While the area of happiness and well-being are gaining more attention, Afshar highlights that scholarship on spirituality, religion and faith lag behind. A 'dimension' of well-being and happiness not separate, they should also be addressed. He does not argue that the international development field should necessarily promote a spiritual dimension, but rather, he makes the case that this undeniable dimension of development should be investigated. In sum, based on Afshar's notion of 'centering development', this paper seeks to move beyond the assumed dichotomy of faith, spirituality and religion as primarily expressions of the South by exploring the interface between faith, the global development project, and religious activism in the North. For a full reframing of development in this manner, I propose that if we are to consider religion and faith important factors in the development of the South, then we too must include it in our understandings of Northern development. This is not only necessary but crucial to pursue

under the notion of centering development which aims to break down the dichotomies that perceive the South as being anti-modern, religious and backwards and the North as progressive, secular and rational.

Despite a longer tradition of discourse and debate around what religion is in comparison to the relatively new concept of development, religion remains notoriously difficult to define. One definition often quoted is provided by Clifford Gertz who regards religion as a "cultural system". In his own words: "religion is a (1) system of symbols which (2) acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and (3) motivations in men by formulation conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic" (p.90). While famous definitions such as this one do exist and should not be overlooked, a more recent approach to clarifying the subject tends to be less direct.

In many of the more recent extensive texts on religion, outlines of historical efforts to define religion are discussed providing enough information without actually producing a definition (Beckford 2003; Beyer 1994, 2006; Hinnells, 2005). This approach parallels that of Max Weber (1963) who simply refuses to characterize religion in his monumental work, *The Sociology of Religion.* He states that "to define 'religion', to say what it is, is not possible at the start of a presentation such as this. Definition can be attempted, if at all, only at the conclusion of the study" (p.1). Since the concept of religion itself can be seen as a constructed term deeply embedded in European Enlightenment thinking and later the history of colonialism, it appears that non-definition has become the most definitive and consistent approach. Susan Budd (1973, as cited in Beckford, 2003, p.16) analyses the various definitions of religion and suggests that "religion is not a single phenomenon and consequently research to establish what religion 'is' or 'does' is vain."

John Hinnells (2005) lends the frame that only religions exist, not religion itself. In this way, religions are composed of individuals who identify as members of a religious group such as Christians, Muslims and so on. He goes on to argue that an act or a thought is religious when an individual or community experiences practicing their 'religion' (p.6). This perspective exemplifies the social constructivist approach which views religion as a site of meaning within a particular social and cultural context. In this

manner, religion can be viewed in its myriad of forms and expressions rather than as a unitary and homogeneous phenomenon that is static across time and space.

Nevertheless, generalizations about religion are abundant and are exemplified in statements such as the 'role of religion in society' or 'the rise in fundamentalism'. Blanket statements such as these mask the complexity of the ways in which people use what they define as religious. Also, as James Beckford (2003) points out, claiming that religion has a role is to simplify the matter and argues that "any generalizations about such a role run the risk of being either trite or indefensible in empirical terms" (p. 170).

However, the ambiguity and culturally shifting nature of the term can contribute to the reflexiveness of the study of religion. As Talal Asad notes: "There cannot be a universal definition of religion, not only because its constituent elements and relationships are historically specific, but because that definition is itself the historical product of discursive practices" (1993, as cited in Willis 2005, p.71).

In relation to international development, Leah Selinger (2004) builds on this idea and makes a convincing case of the misguided emphasis placed on certain facets of religion. She argues that general understandings of religion focus on its use as a spiritual or institutional force rather than as a cultural and social practice that governs worldviews and can directly influence social and economic development (Selinger, 2004, p. 539). The neglect of its impact as a practical and cultural force certainly limits any deeper analyses within development studies as well as within all disciplines.

As evident from this discussion, both religion and development as concepts and institutions are defined by the context of their historical trajectories and in the larger narrative that juxtaposes religion with enlightenment values of rationality, science and progress. In each case, power resides within the dominant understandings at any given time or place and therefore must be unpacked for a textured discourse to emerge. Although this thesis does not have the scope to include extensive sections outlining these particularly trajectories, elements of this type of analysis will be woven throughout the remainder of this chapter.

2.2 Religion and Modernity: Theoretical Groundings

Due to the dominance of modernization and secularization theories that have permeated Western societies, the specific role of religion has been marginalized on account of the belief that it will eventually become irrelevant (Berger 1999; Juergensmeyer, 2005; Selinger, 2004; Sampson, 2005; Ver Beek, 2000). Yet, as modernity is increasingly placed under scrutiny, religion seems to be once again emerging more visibly. Scott M. Thomas highlights this by commenting that the "Western culture of modernity and the institutions of international society embedded in it are being challenged by the global resurgence of religion and cultural pluralism in international relations" (Thomas, 2000, as cited in Selinger, 2004, p. 529). This religious renaissance is still significantly ignored within social analysis although postmodernist thought and its celebration of diversity has at least introduced the space for this discussion to occur. Still, as Jane Sampson (2005) argues, primarily from within the context of Christian modern missions, but with broader implications, postmodernism is often doing nothing more than reinforcing the modern assumption that Christianity is synonymous with colonizer. It achieves this through taking on new fields of investigation such as discourse analysis and other new formulations of academic authority (p.3). What has emerged from these developments is the increasing need for a more nuanced acknowledgment and study of the diversity of modes within which religion exists.

That secularization theory is an offshoot of modernization theory is important to acknowledge in any discussion of religion. Early on in his career, Peter Berger, a leading scholar in religion, suggested that "as there is a secularization of society and culture, so is there a secularization of consciousness" (1969, p. 107-108). This statement reflects the secularization thesis that dominated the study of sociology in the 1970s and consequently contributed to popular understandings of religion. Bryan Wilson in his book *Religion in Secular Society* (1966) laid the foundation for this thesis and defined secularization as "the process whereby religious thinking, practices and institutions lose social significance" (p.14). Drawing on Max Weber, Wilson regards rationalizing processes of modernity as the reason for this decline. Although often supported, this understanding of secularization is not necessarily widely agreed upon. As with many terms intended to

represent phenomena "secularization is one of those essentially contested concepts that is simultaneously central to academic debate and inherently problematic" (Beckford, 2003 p.32).

Depending on one's definition of secularization, understandings of it can differ widely. John Hinnells points out that for some scholars "secularization refers only to the diminishing of the public significance of religion. It does not refer to private levels of religiosity" (2000, p. 292). This private form of religious decline would be referred to as secularism and is a phenomenon that does not necessarily coincide with a withdrawal of religion from the public domain.

Casanova (1994) draws attention to the fact that notions of secularization reflect an ethnocentric lens that sees the European model of secularization as the norm and contrary evidence as exceptions to the rule. Sharon Hanson (1997) reiterates this in her analysis of secularization debates remarking that both critiques and proponents of secularization have had a markedly 'christo-centric' understanding of 'religion' and thus apply trends in Christianity automatically to other religions. The critique of these views has important implications for the study of religion in international development studies.

Thomas Luckmann (1967) comments that the secularization thesis is best described as a mythological account of the emergence of the modern world. Untangling this myth however, proves tricky as Casanova has noted. He states: "it is so intrinsically interwoven with all the theories of the modern world and with the self-understanding of modernity that one cannot simply discard the theory of secularization without putting into question the entire web, including much of the self-understanding of the social sciences" (1994, p.18). This shift in analysis away from secularization is markedly pronounced in Peter Berger's reversal of his earlier claims. In his work, *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, he articulates this turnaround and subsequently warns that "those who neglect religion in their analyses of contemporary affairs do so at great peril" (1999, p.18).

What appears to be a more fruitful approach to the study of religion within the so-called advent of modernity is a lens of pluralism. A recanted Berger along with others, have begun to incorporate a pluralistic understanding of the religious landscape into analyses by identifying diversity and fragmentation rather than decline or persistence.

This approach paves the way for the variety of modes in which religion operates to be negotiated and can include analyses of secularization trends within particular contexts when applicable.

In instances when religion is the central focus of analysis, extremist and militant forms tend to dominate the discussion. While illuminating part of the larger picture, this heavy emphasis ultimately negates efforts to acknowledge the pluralism and diversity of religious modalities. Not only is this tendency present in the academy, but is a part of the collective cultural consciousness in the Global North that promotes fear around religious extremism.

Still, in efforts to complicate understandings of how religion is present in today's global environment, it is crucial not to disregard its negative impacts, its ability to support and legitimize the status quo, as well as how it can inspire frightening forms of radicalism within various faiths. Overwhelming examples of these forms of religious extremism exist globally and seem more poignant post-9/11 in Western consciousness. From the New Christian Right in the United States, Hindu Nationalists in India to the global networks of Islamic militants, religious extremism dominates the headlines and captivates our imaginations. This heightens the necessity to investigate more thoroughly what precisely fundamentalism is.

Peter Berger suggests that we should move away from trying to answer why people feel the need to defend their traditional religious beliefs. He argues that this is a pointless preoccupation for liberal academics (Berger 1997). Sociologist Steve Bruce (2000) elaborates on this by remarking that "the liberal who supposes that his sacred texts are actually human constructions of differing moral worth, whose religion makes little difference in his life, and who is quite happy to accept that what his God requires of him is not binding on other members of his society: this is the strange and remarkable creature" (p.116-17). What Berger and Bruce are articulating is that religious extremism is not new. Rather the trend toward a liberal religion loosely associated with secularization is the anomaly within a historical trajectory that is well acquainted with more conservative religious expressions.

What some scholars argue is new are the shifting contexts in which fundamentalisms are emerging. Bruce (2000) remarks that "fundamentalism is a rational response of

traditionally religious peoples to social, political and economic changes that downgrade and constrain the role of religion in the public world (p.116-7)." In a globalizing world, it is clear that identity is being challenged in a variety of ways as expressed by Arjun Appadurai (1996) in his influential work *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Religion has been one avenue to express this frustration. Keeping in mind a sensitivity to meta-narratives and grand assumptions, these positions appear too neatly packaged and may be essentializing the complexity of what is occurring.

Once again, fundamentalism is another concept that is highly contested and which some scholars argue has been co-opted as a form of social control.[8] This power is not confined to scholarly fields but is part of a cultural narrative that is building in the West. Edward Said (1993) provides a useful lens by deconstructing aspects of power that reside in current understandings of fundamentalism. He argues that "images that go hand in hand with fundamentalism are: fearful images that lack discriminate contents or definition, but they signify moral power and approval for whoever uses them, moral defensiveness and criminalization for whomever they designate...By such means the governability of large numbers of people is assured..."(p. 310). In essence, Said views the category of fundamentalism as a construction that is utilized to control society through fear. This is becoming problematic and so parallels Sampson's argument that calls for a messy, uncomfortable unpacking of the various ways in which religion is present. It requires an exploration of all of the ways in which religious people and communities are responding to modernity and not compartmentalizing all groups with a fundamentalist dimension as simply reactions against modernity (Munson quoted in Hinnells, p. 352). There needs to be a deeper exploration that highlights these nuances and sits with the ambiguities.

Many of these more abstract theoretical discussions of religion and modernity can be tangibly exemplified in an analysis of the literature from the field of international development studies. As a facet of the modernity project, development is one example of an area that marginalizes the role of religion and up until recently has remained

[8] More often, the term religious extremism is used to express the same trends in a more neutral and less Christo-centric manner.

comparatively silent on the subject. A review of this literature will also provide a more focused illustration of the larger problems modernity has raised for the study of religion.

2.3 Religion and International Development

Despite calls for the interface of religion and development to be addressed by scholars and practitioners of development in both the global North and South, the relationship between religion and development is still a significantly under-researched area. This is beginning to shift, as illustrated in the 2003 special edition on the subject in the *Journal of International Development*,[9] but neglect is still widely prevalent. Most scholars on the subject argue that this culture of disregard can, once again, be attributed to the popularity of modernization and secularization theories described above present in the global North.

This neglect of religion in international development studies literature is exemplified in a survey of keywords used from 1982 to 1998 in three widely recognized development journals (*World Development, Journal of Developing Studies, and Journal of Developing Areas*). Kurt Alan Ver Beek (2000), in his article "Spirituality: A Development Taboo", discovers not only a lack of policy and research on spirituality and religion but also a conscious avoidance of the topic (p.60). Selinger (2004) builds on these findings through surveying the works of the United Nations, DFID (the UK Development Agency), and the World Bank. She notes that very few articles address both topics and when they do, they continue to sideline religion in the construction and critique of development strategy (p.525). Kurt Alan Ver Beek diverges from the modernity and secularization explanations of religion's exclusion from development discussions by expanding on other potential reasons. He notes that a variety of factors may be causing this neglect ranging from a lack of precedence in models for addressing religion (and what he refers to as spirituality), trepidation around the negative historical role of religion, as well as the fear of imposing outsider perspectives that are often coupled with a scientific and materialistic bias (2000).

Regardless of the reasons why religion is selectively missing in Northern development discourse, Ver Beek (2000) makes a remarkably obvious case as to why

[9] A number of these articles are mentioned at various points throughout the review of literature.

religious and spiritual dimensions should be addressed. Due to development's traditional focus on the South, it is important to acknowledge how crucial religion is for people in the Global South. It shapes their understanding of the world and their place in it both individually and collectively (p. 31). While Ver Beek makes an astute point, such a vast generalization regarding the experiences of people in the Global South, is slightly tinged with an element 'othering'. As this thesis highlights, religion also influences communities and individuals in the global North in a diversity of ways which affect their worldview profoundly.

Despite religion's marginalization in mainstream development, religious elements are active within the development sphere. William F. Ryan (2005) in the IDRC publication, *Spirituality, and Economic Development: Opening a Dialogue,* emphasizes that once the secular nature of Western society is exposed as a convenient construct, the centrality of religion in the Global South will be more accurately perceived. Ryan interviewed scholars and practitioners from the South finding overwhelming concurrence that:
"the position that people — their culture and their beliefs — are the central players in, and unique subjects of, their own human development is an important part of this vision [redefining development]. In this view, development can be truly human only when the people themselves are full partners in the creation of their own development, not merely passive receivers or survivors of packaged Western development. Most of those interviewed expressed a strong hope to see research on the role that values and systems — religious, spiritual, and ethical — play in human development" (Chapter 2).

Even when religion makes an appearance in development literature and practice, a number of common perceptions seem to dominate. Often, it is regarded as solely a tool of colonial and imperialist conquest (Christianity). In the era of accelerated globalization it is also viewed as an avenue for exporting the economic values that direct development (Christianity). Lastly, it is often painted as backwards, traditional and staunchly anti-feminist (Islam and the Roman Catholic Church). As Jane Sampson (2005) argues, yes, it is all of these above but the reality of the diversity of religious expressions and modes in society is more much nuanced and deserves an exploration that includes and highlights its complexities.

Nevertheless, this call for a more textured picture of religious diversity is not an invitation to overemphasize the positive aspects of religion in societies. An apologetic approach can continue along a line of inquiry that may potentially lead to the problematic trap of romanticizing religion. Anne-Marie Holenstein (2005) warns of this potential for misuse of the world's religions "as a focus on the absolute and unconditional may translate into totalitarian characteristics, intolerance, proselytism, missionary zeal or the forming of sects" (p.11). Studies similar to Holenstein's accurately assess the importance of paying heed to the negative aspects of religion within the global context, much of which was illustrated within the above discussion on religious extremism.

This romanticism can also lead to a reductionist lens that views some religions (primarily those referred to as 'traditional') as 'authentic', 'pure', and 'natural', and most often only in its pre-colonial forms and expressions. It is sometimes placed on the pedestal of a pristine, pre-development world which often has an agenda in its wake. This reductionist catch is one that post-development has been known to entertain. Stuart Corbridge (1998), in his select review on post-development literature, highlights the complexities of addressing this. He notes "any development studies worth its salt should reflect on alternative accounts of the good life, and should not dismiss out of hand the claim that a good life is best lived locally, in contact with the soil, and in accord with Gandhian notions of beauty, frugality and simplicity. But these nods to power and truth should not be made uncritically" (p. 139). He goes on to argue that post-development often falls into a dichotomized view laden with unhelpful binaries and 'wobbly romanticism' of traditional cultures including religion (p.140).

Thus, while the mainstream field of international development has engaged in a form of secular fundamentalism that neglects religion, religious and faith-based organizations and institutions (primarily Northern and Christian) have been the chief actors emphasizing the religious and spiritual dimensions of development.

More recently, the lack of knowledge around the role of religious non-governmental organizations (RNGOs) as major development players has been acknowledged as a crucial gap. Julia Berger (2003) describes her paper "Religious Non-Governmental Organizations: An Exploratory Analysis", as representing the "first systematic attempt at an analysis of religious non-governmental organizations" to highlight this articulated gap.

She states: "largely ignored as an organizational field, RNGOs constitute a new breed of religious actors shaping global policy" (p.1).

Julia Hearn (2002) discusses these 'invisible NGOs' in the context of Kenya, arguing that missionaries are alive and well "far from being the shadowy historical figures of popular and academic imagination (p. 55)." In Africa alone the number of missionaries rose from 10,000 at the beginning of the century to nearly 50,000 at the beginning of the new millennium (p. 57). Driving the point further, Christopher Pallas (2005) compares the clout of FBOs to that of the World Bank as the most important development institution and argues that "while it would be impossible to estimate expenditures by faith-based groups with any accuracy, one could easily argue that the influence of religion is even more pervasive than that of the Bank" (p.677). Therefore it is significant to note "that the past five years have witnessed a major shift in the Bank's policy towards faiths and faith-based NGOs, particularly those involved in a development" with the onset of a deliberate program of interaction (p. 677).

While FBOs and RNGOs are at the forefront of development initiatives, a variety of conventional religious organizations and institutions from various faiths are also playing a part. Katherine Marshall (2001) in her influential article "Development and Religion: A Different Lens on Development Debates", calls for a dialogue between development institutions and faith institutions, especially as "the events of September 11, 2001 have underscored starkly the powerful links between religion and modernization" and thus posing "a host of new questions about how the links operate and how thinkers and actors should respond" (p.1). Supporting an initiative that aims at bridging this gulf, Marshall has been instrumental in the creation of the World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD)[10] "which aims to engage a wide-ranging international and national dialogue among faith and development institutions, with the effort to combat world poverty the central focus. She argues that through the opportunities and pitfalls of this initiative it "has brought to the fore ethical and pragmatic dilemmas for practitioners in quite diverse fields" (p1). Wendy Tyndale (2000), desiring to bridge the chasm between faith and development with the advent of the WFDD, delves into many of the core issues by asking

[10] See World Faiths Development Dialogue publications: "A Different Perspective on Poverty and Development", Comment on the World Development Report 2000, (June 1999) and *Cultures, Spirituality and Development*, Oxford: WFDD, 2001,

questions around the possibility of convergence between faith communities and development organizations. She concludes hopefully that regardless of divergent agendas: "if the chasm is left to yawn and no attempt is made to bridge it, the world will be the poorer" (p.18). While these efforts mark the introduction of religion in a more substantial way, they also pose some problems when critiqued within the broader architecture of neoliberalism. The focus on outsourcing development issues to institutionalized religion reeks of the general push towards exiting these agenda items from the sphere of collective governance and state responsibility. This 'privatization' of development issues could arguably be seen to mark the triumph of global neoliberalism. In this way, emphasis on the institutional partnerships that are also exclusively Judeo-Christian in focus should not be given sole authorship over religion's role in development. Leah Selinger supports this critique making the claim that the "understanding of religion that has been expanded in the development discourse has focused on its use as a spiritual or institutional force, not as a cultural and social practice that governs worldviews and can directly influence social and economic development (p. 539). She calls for this shift in order to expand the notions of how religions are operating in relation to development.

Whereas much of the literature covered has a Christian or at least Western religious emphasis, explicitly noting that regional forms of religion are expressing themselves in similar ways despite often being considered outsiders to the current development paradigm (or at least only on the receiving end) is crucial. Satish Kumar (2003), in his article "Development and Religion: Cultivating a Sense of the Sacred", shows how development and religion have grown together culminating in some of the significant responses of religions to the rapid changes modernity has produced. In particular, he explores the inspirations, goals and movements that follow a Gandhian view, Buddhism, and Liberation Theology. Other examples include Stuart Chandler's (2005) book, *Establishing a Pure Land on Earth: The Foguang Buddhist Perspective on Modernization and Globalization* and Bassam Tibi's (2001) *Islam Between Culture and Politics*.

Among other trends, the literature above illustrates that the acknowledgement of how religious and spiritual worldviews play a crucial role in how people and communities of

the Global South navigate their world and thus make decisions is blossoming. Meanwhile, the role of religion and the modes in which it is present within the Global North in relation to development issues continues to be neglected. Not only are people in the majority world turning to religious and faith perspectives in order to create meaning and solidarity in the face of global issues, but so are individuals and communities in the minority world. This gap in literature is just perpetuated by the plethora of studies which explore religious extremism while refusing to acknowledge the other ways in which religion is manifesting, shifting and reframing issues in the Global North.

2.4 Religion in Global Civil Society

While development scholarship is in the preliminary stages of wading through the complexity of religion in the contemporary world and its relationship to progress, the field of religious studies (and other disciplines with longer histories of studying religion)[11], are much further ahead. The Canadian philosopher Charles C. Taylor's work has profoundly impacted the study of religion in this way. Introducing the notion of 'modern social imaginaries' (2004) he notes how the long march of modernity has contributed to a displacement of religion from the public sphere. While most scholars only make it this far, Taylor goes on to argue beyond the secularization thesis as to why this has occurred. He observes that only one mode of religion has actually been displaced, the separation of 'God' from authority. He speculates that this does not end personal religion nor its existence in public sphere and further states that "we must not loose sight that this opens a new space for religion in public life" (p.187).

More of Taylor's insights that are particular useful in relation to this paper are his explorations around the role of identity in relation to faith at this juncture in the western social imaginary. He convincingly argues that in modern society what bonds people in common purpose is their political identity in relation to the modern state and the ideals of freedom and personal agency. In reflecting on the role of faith, he makes the case that the space for religion in the secular world becomes one where 'God' can figure strongly into political identity whether or not it is overtly articulated as such. In his own words:

[11] Due to how new international development is as a field of study it does not have a history of engaging questions of religion in the same way as more established disciplines.

> This is the new space for God in the secular world. Just as in personal life, the dissolution of the enchanted world can be compensated by devotion, a strong sense of the involvement of God in my life, so in the public world, the disappearance of an ontic dependence on something higher can be replaced by a strong presence of God in our political identity. In both individual and social life, the sacred is no longer encountered as an object among other objects, in a special place, time or person. But God's will can still be very present to us in the design of things, in cosmos, state, and personal life. God can seem the inescapable source for our power to impart order to lives, both individually and socially (2004, p.193).

Within the construction of modern social imaginaries, another overarching theme presently being explored by scholars of religion is the diverse role religion plays in global society. In his studies of contemporary religion, Peter Beyer (2006) a Canadian academic, sees religious change and alterations as an insightful window for gaining an understanding of globalization itself. He sees religions as carriers of notions enmeshed in globalization rather than simply going through a process of reasserting themselves within this shifting climate. Juergensmeyer (2005) is also among those who explore the ways in which religion is present in global society. In particular, he discusses the various forms of religious antiglobalism that are emerging. According to Juergensmeyer, the loss of faith in secular nationalism has sparked a perceived loss in agency and identity in which assertions of both traditional and new forms of religious identities are being created in attempts to reclaim personal and cultural power (p. 147). In *Religion in Global Civil Society* edited by Juergensmeyer (2005), a variety of authors illustrate that forms of religious resistance to globalization are much more nuanced. In the preface Juergensmeyer indicates that the intention of the collection is to "facilitate understanding of [this] syncretic soup with religious flavours". Collectively the authors embark on a task to explore the role of religion in an emerging global civil society ultimately abandoning typical characterizations and providing clarity.

In addition, other scholars remark on how the world's religions may even offer new conceptualizations for 'progress' (which will be elaborated on in the discussion on liberation theologies in Chapter 3). In this spirit, Richard Falk argues that "a religious/spiritual orientation needs to inform the energies of globalization from below if

it is to have any serious prospect of launching a political project that offers an alternative to that being foreshadowed and actualized by the largely economistic forces associated with globalization-from-above" (2001, p. 59). Furthering this notion, Bernardo Kliksberg (2003) suggests that because religions link thought and action as an integral part of experience, they may serve in introducing the notion of "the necessity of helping others in order to achieve a sense of coherence and fulfillment" (p.62). Jen Peirce and Lisa Kowalchuk (2005) parallel Kliksberg in their case study of faith solidarity movements arguing that the pursuit of spiritual self-fulfillment can be entwined with an essentially altruistic drive to attend to the welfare of others (p.434). While much debate occurs around the limitations of an individualistic society to have the common good in mind, Pierce and Kowalchuk argue that the quest for self-betterment framed within religion might even be helpful. In their study, the shift from a paternalistic form of help has blossomed into solidarity work where individuals and communities no longer hold a dichotomous view of the helper and who is being helped. Heavily relied upon by Pierce and Kowalchuk, Paul Lichterman's (1996) study on American activists is quite relevant here although not a work that focuses on religion. He challenges the myth that the modern western emphasis on personal fulfillment necessarily weakens commitment to the common good. He argues that individualism can sometimes serve to enhance public political engagement, inviting us to rethink common understandings of commitment, community and individuals. These themes will be drawn out further in this study when KAIROS is discussed in chapters 5 and 6.

To conclude, Taylor's (2007) most recent publication, *In a Secular Age*, brings as much closure as possible to the open ended questions presented within this review of literature. He argues that the contemporary world must now be regarded as a site of continuing multiplication of new options, religious, spiritual, and anti-religious, on which individuals and groups seize in order to make sense of their lives and give shape to their spiritual aspirations. This thesis explores an expression of this uncomfortable though significant position.

2.5 Methodology: Grounded Theory and Narrative Analysis

Although the broad, macro level framework of this thesis is theoretically heavy as illustrated by the discussions above, it is also structured to allow for the case study to have an emergent quality within the larger argument. In order to contextualize the larger macro level dialogue presented, the case study of KAIROS serves to ground the discussion in a rich analysis of related mezzo/micro levels. As such, research methods had to allow for KAIROS to be more than an anecdotal example of fundamentalism's foil. Due to this general desire, qualitative research methods based on grounded theory (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and narrative analysis (Berger, 1971) both in the tradition of social constructionism were employed. This intentional approach was used in order to create a research environment that allowed for unique outcomes and the ability to draw out surfacing themes from the data.

I found that basing the analysis of the data 'made' on grounded theory methods helpful in guiding the balance between thinking abstractly with analytical distance and drawing on experience, insight and past theoretical knowledge. Grounded theory (GT) is about understanding processes and meaning in a way that pays close attention to time and context. Taking it further, Anselm and Corbin (1990) define it as a method "that is inductively derived from the study of phenomena it represents and seeks to analyze the content providing a base for further theorizing rather than just presenting a description of the data" (p.12). An important requirement of GT is that the researcher be actively engaged in the research process while it is occurring rather than waiting until it is finished in order to begin processing the findings. There is a strong emphasis on dialogue and the challenging of ideas and their development throughout the process of making data, all of which played heavily into this particular research study. Various methods of data making are also encouraged for 'rich' and 'thick' data.

To diversify my findings I chose to make data through three different avenues: content and discourse analysis of KAIROS documents, publications and website, participatory observation and interviews. The research itself was multi-cited and took place in Halifax and Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia, Sackville, New Brunswick and at the head offices of KAIROS in Toronto, Ontario. The research took place over three months between September 2007 and December 2007 which allowed for space and preliminary

analysis between data collection opportunities, interviews and for the 'thickening' of the emerging narratives.

The notion of narrative and 'story' deserves particular mention here in relation to the rest of the study. Overall, an emphasis on narrative is woven throughout the thesis with the intention of making linkages between the micro level analysis of the stories of individuals interviewed, to the mezzo-level of the organization KAIROS and finally to the critical deconstruction of limited yet dominant macro-narratives of religion and faith. As Teierney (2000) describes:

> ...a goal of [narrative] work in a postmodern age is to break the strangle-hold of metanarratives that establishes rules of truth, legitimacy, and identity. The work of life history becomes the investigation of the mediating aspects of culture, the interrogation of its grammar, and the decentering of its norms (quoted in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.668).

In this manner narrative analysis is useful for this particular research project but it does also pose some methodological hurdles for interpreting, representing, and validating the information gathered.

What should be kept in mind when conducting narrative analysis are the ways in which memory reconstructs events and history (whether collective or individual) and how the stories which are told and selected are all subject to interpretation (Chase, 2005). Due to this, the context of individuals, KAIROS as an organization and the local and global trends to which they consider themselves responding are highlighted and explored. Particular emphasis will be given to the narratives of Christianity and faith that the communities and individuals tell, reproduce and aspire to. While I am taking a somewhat 'authoritative' voice as the researcher, I aim to do so in a way where my voice is not disrespectful, only different. Through the presentation of extensive quotations from the narrators' stories, space will left for alternative interpretations to be made.

2.5.1 Textual, Content and Discourse Analysis

I was easily able to access a variety of text documents from KAIROS regarding its inception, mandate, programming and community educational materials, as well as its theological groundings. Policy papers were available at the head office in Toronto as

well as documents from the previous coalitions that merged into KAIROS. A sprinkling of newspaper articles on KAIROS initiatives in various Canadian newspapers and publications were also collected. The KAIROS website was a central resource in helping construct the contextual narrative I provide of the organization in chapter 4.

This part of the data collection process was useful in providing context and supplemental information in relation to interviews and participant observation. The documents provided information that thickened general themes, shed light on 'missing' pieces and served to highlight any divergent forms of data that emerged. Thus, apart from the website, much of this portion of the research provided indirect data which offered further insights into participants' experiences. It allowed me to more thoroughly engage the dominant discourses, ideologies as well as the historically situated nature of KAIROS (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 97).

2.5.2 Participant Observation

Part of my field research took place in Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia where I attended the Atlantic Regional Meeting of KAIROS from September 28th – 30th, 2007. This annual meeting is an opportunity for representatives from member churches and individuals who are part of the local KAIROS community to meet, attend educational workshops, pray, share stories of the past year, discuss future plans and engage in dialogue with some of the KAIROS staff from Toronto. I used this opportunity to situate my study within the broader shared experience of the community as well as any observable dissonance. Participant observation played a key role in contextualizing how the Atlantic Region of KAIROS operates as a group, particularly in relation to the head office in Toronto.

Shifting to another form of context less graspable through interviews or text analysis, participant-observation can reveal the 'common sense' from which people are working (Lichterman, 1996). It helps to uncover what "everybody knows" and the normative assumptions that people in a community can often use as a common point of departure. For example, it allowed me to observe how members of the KAIROS community have structured the divide between "charity" and "social justice" in terms of the KAIROS mandate. As one participant remarked "As we *ALL* know, we are about transforming

charity to justice. There are many problems with churches perpetuating the charity approach. The purpose of KAIROS is to bring together all justice issues and begin to formulate coherence."

I took field notes in order to record my observations, quickly developing ways to do it more skillfully and thus allowing me to be more present in the experience. I used broad coding and semi-structured methods early on so that I was less likely to fall into the trap of reporting 'everything' I saw. This allowed for my notes to be reread and revisited at a later date through a different and more removed lens of analysis.

On a pragmatic level, this initial weekend allowed me to make connections with staff from Toronto in order to ensure interviews at the KAIROS head office a month later. I also developed greater access to the local KAIROS community and through observation was able to make strategic and diverse choices as to whom I approached for interviews. As well, it provided an opportunity for reflecting and revising the interview structure and questions that I would later use (and continue to revise).

2.5.3 Interviews

Initially I intended to interview 10 individuals associated with KAIROS but due to various unforeseen circumstances I ended up with 8 interviews. Although a small sample, I have supplemented these interviews with the above described methods of textual analysis and participant observation in order to flesh out the data collected. While it may not be obvious in the presentation of the data, these three methods equally underpin the themes presented in Chapter 4 and thus fill in the 'gap' that only 8 interviews would leave. Also, because this thesis explores the meaning around faith spaces of activism rather than providing an assessment of the organization KAIROS itself, fewer in-depth interviews was the more appropriate research method. Interviews took place in various locations within Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Ontario. They were most often in the homes of community members, the KAIROS offices in Toronto, coffee shops, and on Dalhousie campus (when interviewing a student). The interviews were one to two hours in length with some follow-up interviews for clarification. I chose in-depth semi-structured interviews in order to allow for an emergent quality in the narratives shared with me. The open ended nature of the interview structure allowed for a comfortable,

conversational dialogue to develop and I was reflective of the situated nature of myself as the interviewer in the construction of the story. This form of 'active interviewing' is described by Holstein and Gubrium as follows:

> Construed as active, the subject behind the respondent not only hold facts and details of experience, but, in the very process of offering them up for response, constructively adds to, takes away from, and transforms the facts and details. The respondent can hardly 'spoil' what he or she is, in effect, subjectively creating (1997, as cited in Silverman, 2001, p. 95).

I kept a rough interview guide in order to balance the emergent themes with threads that I had begun to observe through participant observation and textual analysis. Of course the process was not always straightforward and I quickly learned that I had structured the interview in a way that started too focused and caught participants off guard. In particular, it became clear to me early on that "activism" was a contentious word for some. Not every participant felt comfortable with using the term and this led me to reflect on the identity formation of the community in a way that I had not yet conceptualized. The interviews I conducted were spread out and so following the methods of grounded theory I began data analysis and transcription immediately in order to prepare me for the next interview by drawing out emergent themes and seeking disparate information. Thus the interview structure developed over the course of the two months I conducted field research.

In order to capture the diversity of the participants' experiences and perspectives while still seeking to focus the study, my interview guide drew on the following themes:

I) Joining KAIROS:

This section was needed in order to provide background for each participant as to what attracted them to KAIROS, when and why they joined or were involved in its creation, their role etc. These questions often evoked more personal questions that were emphasized and drawn out in a later portion of the interview.

II) Reflections on KAIROS:

This section sought to gain insight into the more personalized narratives as expressed through interviews regarding the mandate and purpose of KAIROS. Questions explored

such dimensions as: its structure, theological roots, its role, struggles and successes, demographics, denominational dynamics, geographic relationships throughout Canada, its perceived impacts on communities and individuals, and what makes it unique.

III) Reflections on Faith, Community and Social Justice[12]:

I wanted to draw out themes of identity, faith and activism so specific questions were tailored to these objectives. More broadly I asked individuals to share their thoughts on the concepts linked to KAIROS' stated mandate such as development, globalization and justice. I asked questions regarding the larger roles they saw of community and faith in the pursuit of activism and justice.

IV) A Personal Journey of Faith and Activism:

This section sought to draw out each participant's individual narrative and journey of faith and activism, specifically in relation to faith communities. To give some poignant examples, questions revolved around the desire to make the world a better place, the pursuit of justice, the roles of faith and community in their activism, the experiences, books, people, religious or otherwise that have contributed to their present worldview, and how it has shifted over time and in relation to their affiliation to KAIROS.

V) Envisioning the Future:

Finally, I was interested in their opinions on the present dominant cultural narratives of faith and religion within the North. In relation to these themes I asked them about what they envisioned as the potential role of Christian churches and faith communities in a globalized world. I also asked them for reflections on what they realistically perceived as occurring.

2.5.4 The Recruitment Process and Participant Selection

The sample selection was intended to reflect a cross-section of members, staff, and community affiliates within KAIROS in order to bring diversity to the findings. I utilized a snowball sampling which refers to a nonrandom sample in which the researcher begins with one case, and then based on information about interrelationships from that case, identifies other cases, and then repeats the process (Neuman, 2006, p.223). This was supplemented by purposive sampling where participants were selected because they met

[12] The usage of 'social justice' in this case also includes economic, cultural, environmental justice as well.

a certain criteria to generally represent the research population or held a specific position in the community.

I made my initial contacts at the regional meeting in Nova Scotia where I was able to be more selective about whom I interviewed in order to bring a more purposeful diversity to the group. Thus at the conclusion of the interviews 3 were with KAIROS staff members in Toronto (2 male, 1 female), 1 interview was with a youth member from the Global South (female) (she is also a staff member of Atlantic KAIROS), and 4 interviews with voluntary Maritime members (2 male, 2 female). The participation criteria was broad and only required that participants were staff or members of KAIROS over the age of 18.

The above section reflects the intentional choice to have an equal number of men and women and an equal number of staff and general members as participants. I was also happily surprised to find a participant who is immigrant from Sudan. Although only one interview, it added immensely in contributing healthy diversification and fragmentation to the findings.

2.5.5 Reliability, Validity and Positionality

Approaching the credibility of any qualitative research project with rigor and reflexivity on the part of the researcher is crucial. For both issues of reliability and validity I intentionally diversified the type of data collected. As Kirk and Miller (1986) argue, the value of multi-sourced approach to data gathering is that it "forces the [researcher] to imagine how multiple, but somehow different, qualitative measures might simultaneously be true" (p. 42).

The observation, texts and interviews that were gathered occurred over a period of time which allowed for flexibility in the process. This lengthier period of time allowed for early categorizations and hypotheses (based on grounded theory methods or analytic induction) that could be fleshed out or challenged in later interviews in a more systematic way. Each type of data was analyzed with sensitivity to the context that it was gathered in as well as in acknowledgement of the audience it was articulated for. From this perspective, any forms of dissonance were contextualized rather than given hierarchical levels of 'truth' over one another. At the same time, textual data is often considered to be

more reliable than other forms of qualitative data because of its accessibility to other researchers, and thus helped round out my study (Silverman, 2001, p. 229).

As it is important to maintain reflexivity as a researcher in terms of how the data is represented, paying close attention to one's own background is crucial. Quite often, when people found out about the topic of my study (friends, academics, and peers) the first question they asked was: "are you religious?" I quickly formed a response that was both succinct and honest but my curiosity was piqued as to *why* the question was so quickly asked in the first place. This was not the case for participants of the study and I am still interested if therefore it was assumed that I was Christian or that either way it was irrelevant to them.

Within the academic community to be religious and study religion seems uncomfortably taboo in an institution of secular ideals. Thus, the secular study and theological study of religion rarely meet. Situated within this pervasive sense of uneasiness, my own religious background in some ways seems more legitimate than I myself am comfortable with. My religious upbringing was varied and emphatically not Christian. A child of new-agers seeking enlightenment, I was brought up in a religious community that barely resembled any form of a historically constructed understanding of monotheism. What this unusual childhood (primarily of eclectic 'Eastern' religious flavours) did instill in me was a curiosity as to how religion, faith and spirituality influence how communities and individuals see their world and thus act in it.

Throughout the research process it quickly became clear to me that while secular academic discussions of religion speaking to its negative aspects are increasing abundantly, any analysis of moderate or liberal forms of religious expressions come from within a faith perspective. For example, every text that I encountered outlining liberal forms of Christianity in Canada have been written by an academic or theologian associated with Christianity. All graduate theses that even remotely relate to my study are from theological colleges. Thus my personal bias lies in the encouragement of developing space for both/and - the complexity of religious expression in the contemporary world. As John Hinnells (2005) writes, one of the motivating factors in his choice to study religion "is to encourage knowledge and understanding between religions and cultures, based on the assumption that prejudice will be overcome if each knows

more about the other" (p.9). The media and many sections of society have stereotypical images of 'the other' and today that 'other' is often, although not always, found in religious fundamentalism. As this study illustrates, there is more to the story that needs to be articulated if we are to work towards a peaceful, global community.

2.5.6 Research and Methodological Limitations

Exploring the limitations of my research project is an important component in creating credibility around its objectives. In highlighting a liberal Christian movement that is largely a minority in relation to other religious developments, I may be insinuating a broader trend that does not actually exist. This concern around generalizability is supported by the criticisms of Marc Edelman (2001) regarding the study of social movements more generally. He argues that scholars often only research groups and initiatives that they support which may create an unbalanced representation of social movements more broadly. Pierce and Kowalchuk (2005) on the other hand, highlight that a void exists in scholarship on social movements concerning adherents who are driven by religious values and beliefs. In addition, another easily launched criticism towards this study is its potential to be anecdotal in nature. As Denzin and Lincoln (1994) accurately assess: "many qualitative researchers employ...purposive, and not random, sampling methods. They seek out groups, settings and individuals where...the processes being studied are most likely to occur" (p. 202).

In light of these limitations, a significant amount of mulling and preparation was undertaken on my part to address them. Purposive sampling demands thinking critically about the parameters of the case study. As such, KAIROS, while anecdotal for my larger theoretical argument, offers further insights through the method of narrative analysis at the micro and mezzo levels. In reference to generalizability, while it is just one case study KAIROS is an ecumenical organization that has the membership of eleven mainline Christian denominations in Canada. Thus, it can in some ways speak to a trend that is occurring within the mainline churches that could not occur if the study was of a single religious non-governmental organization or the efforts of one denomination alone. To balance this concern, the discussion will be contextualized within the broader religious trends (to fill the gap of a 'deviant' case study) evident in Canada. Also, it should be

noted that the World Council of Churches, an international Christian ecumenical organization with membership of over 340 churches, exemplifies the analysis and interpretation of faith that directs KAIROS at the international level.[13]

Financial limitations also shaped this thesis. I found this to be a challenging aspect of the research project and in many ways limited avenues that I would have liked to pursue. One of these would be to research communities in the Global South that are partnered with KAIROS to more fully explore KAIROS' role and how it is perceived within these communities.

[13] This was confirmed in a review of WCC literature (in Chapter 2) and during an interview where one participant, a staff member of KAIROS noted that general themes of liberation theology are an ecumenical current being developed by the WCC and is a theology with which KAIROS has strong links. In reference to this theological work he states: "it is adopted in the assemblies of the WCC and it is also adopted here, used and welcomed."

CHAPTER THREE:

SITUATING KAIROS: A LOCAL CANADA, A GLOBAL VIEW

3.1 Global Trends with Local Impacts

The oppressive nature of the present global structure is wreaking havoc not only the vast majority of the world's population, but on the planet itself (Berry, 1991; Bello, 2002). The dismal forecasts that are predicted indicate that 'progress' needs to be rethought immediately in order for the planet to survive. As scientists warn that global warming is occurring much more rapidly than anticipated, the gap between the global rich and poor continues to widen with 'Fourth Worlds' existing in the Global North, primarily in the neglected communities of indigenous peoples. Yet, the modernity project continues seemingly unfettered.

Sufficed to say, a thoroughly depressing and comprehensive discussion of neoliberal led globalization and its wake of destruction is not essential here as it is discussed in abundance elsewhere.[14] What can be gained though from the various dialogues of resistance emerging is that change is not optional; global economic and environmental justice needs to be pursued (Eaton & Lorentzen, 2003). Cries from the Global South have long been ignored and the time for agency within the North should be acknowledged as a primary site of resistance and solidarity. Gary Gardner (2006) emphasizes the necessity of Northern agency in engaging new notions of progress. He states: "citizens and leaders [in the North] will need to overturn many of the assumptions about how [they] live, from what constitutes a normal diet or a normal way to get to work, to how [their] communities deal with poverty" (p. 21). This refashioning of the modern lens will have to to occur and influence whole societies, if it is to be successful. It is no surprise then that the role of the Global North should be reintroduced into the dialogue of dissecting progress because of its powerful agency in setting the agenda.

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[14]For a comprehensive and succinct critical account of globalization refer to Ellewood, W. (2006). *The No-Nonsense Guide to Globalization*. Toronto, ON: Between the Lines.

In particular, many of the assumptions and normative truths that need to be re-evaluated and are presently directing the global economy are evident in the existence of the development project (as illustrated in Chapter 2). Mainstream development has a tendency to dichotomize the North as the giver of knowledge and the South as the receiver of knowledge rarely reflecting much further. As one of the primary tools in implementing 'progressive' values, development is most often directed toward maturing the Global South along a linear paradigm of modernity. Through this lens, the problems of the Global South are seen as separate and unrelated to the development of the North. For example, reasoning around the ecological crisis is often off-loaded onto the population explosion in the majority world rather than at the role over-consumption plays in the minority world (Shiva, 2005). Here Afshar's (2005) notion of recentering development becomes pivotal in shifting current ideas of progress. Again, he argues that we need to "explicitly commit to human and ecological development with a special concern for the vulnerable in both the North and South, but also for the good of the North and for our intertwined pasts, presents and futures" (p. 259). In this way, the North needs to reevaluate its own direction especially its role as the driving force behind not only under-development and under-consumption (referring to those who are unable to access basic resources) but more importantly, over-development and over-consumption.

In making a 'local' connection in direct relation to the site of this research, Canada, Thom Workman (2003) speaks to the complexity of globalization's varied impact on the Maritimes in his recent book *Social Torment: Globalization and Atlantic Canada.* He writes:

> A richer and more rounded story about globalization, one that recognizes that its successes and achievements have been at the expense of vulnerable people around the world, will resound equally well with a young Malaysian woman toiling away in a semiconductor facility and a single mother part-timing in a call centre in New Brunswick. Ironically, it is precisely this side of globalization neglected by pundits, journalists, intellectuals and politicians that Atlantic Canadians are more likely to experience. Although the region is increasingly plugged into the globalizing world, the glamorous dimension of globalization is not as obvious in the region as it is elsewhere. Globalization does

> not sparkle in Nova Scotia or Prince Edward Island the way it does in Toronto, New York and Tokyo (p. 158).

As Workman illustrates, critiques of globalization are increasingly present within academic and popular discourse but as this next section will reveal, these ideas are also well developed within theology. KAIROS takes a similar stance on globalization's impacts both globally and locally, a perspective found in the liberal Christian body of thought called First World or Northern Liberation Theology.

3.2 Northern Liberation Theologies[15]

While religion has been marginalized within the setting of secular academia, a plethora of radical literature has emerged from within a variety of religious traditions. Due to a focus on Christian expressions of faith for this thesis, Christian liberation theologies are highlighted in full acknowledgement of similar movements and ideas of resistance emerging within other religions and faiths.

Often, when liberation theology is mentioned, Latin America, the Roman Catholic Church, and the influential writings of individuals such as Gustavo Gutiérrez (Teología de la Liberación, Perspectivas, 1973), Paulo Freire (Pedagogia Del Oprimido, 1968) and Clodovis and Leonard Boff (Fazer Teologia da Liberatção, 1987) come to mind. Yet, liberation theologies have become a vast and assorted tradition emerging from various local contexts around the globe from a diversity of denominational backgrounds. They presently range from the dependency analyses of Latin America, the feminist, black and Aboriginal liberation theologies of North America, those relevant to the continents of Africa and the Asia, and the newly emerging movements regarded as ecotheologies of liberation. The breadth and richness of these dialogues are far too vast to cover for this thesis but deserve mention if only to illuminate the movements afoot.

Another important note is to add that these schools of thought do not necessarily agree with one another around modes of analysis and issues of common concern. Robert McCafee Brown (1993) addresses these tensions in theological reflection while also acknowledging that liberation theologies can share a profound sense of unity. These sentiments are echoed by Alfred T. Hennelly (1995) who remarks that this unity is one

[15] Most often referred to as First World Liberation Theology.

that requires the diversity and the multiplicity of experiences, cultures and contexts in order to spark passionate dialogue which will ensure that the tradition remains healthy, reflective and relevant.

Although no longer able to solely claim the territory of liberation theology, the Latin American tradition has been monumental in shifting mainstream ideas within present day Christianity. The Uruguayan Jesuit, Juan Luis Segundo (1976), writing from the Latin American context remarks that "[the theology of liberation] is an irreversible thrust in the Christian process of creating a new consciousness and maturity in [the] faith. Countless Christians have committed themselves to a fresh and radical interpretation of their faith, to a new re-experiencing of it in their real lives. And they have done this not only as isolated individuals but also as influential and sizeable groups within the church" (p.3).

A social analysis of structural inequalities and oppression evident within Latin America led innovative thinkers to articulate the ways in which injustices were being perpetuated through the legacy of colonialism and the dominant, global economic structure (Gutierrez, 1973). Most importantly, the present role of the Roman Catholic Church was placed under scrutiny with liberation theology intent on filling the gap. Since then numerous liberation theologies have emerged both from within the Global South and Global North offering a critical analysis of social justice and inequality. In the Global North this body of literature is know as First World Liberation Theologies or Northern Liberation Theology (NLT).

Some of the most prolific writers out of the NLT tradition argue that liberation theology is not only relevant to the Latin American context but wherever oppression exists. In the context of neoliberal led globalization, these theologians see liberation theologies as globally relevant, emerging in nuanced and unique ways in relation to particular local sites (Hennelly, 1995). It is a commitment to 'bearing witness' to oppression rather than simply a charity approach which is more common within North American congregations (Moe-Loebeda, 2002, p. 121). The point of departure then for these theologians, is an attempt to seek truthful social analyses that exposes injustice which develops a conscientiatization that in turn seeks change (Brown, 1993, p. 20).

Without painting a picture that could potentially allude to a larger trend that may not exist, liberation theologies must be recognized as a small but growing component of

theology that includes postmodern elements. To contextualize this, Hennelly initially gives a dire synopsis of the present majority of theological work proliferating in the North as theology that "painstakingly supports the status quo of church and state, that [is] carefully chosen to insure tenure and promotion, and that succeed[s] in keeping good Christians in the first world tranquilized and pacified, despite screams from all over the globe" (1995, p. 236). Nevertheless, voices of resistance can be found and are increasing in numbers.

Jürgen Moltmann, a European Lutheran theologian, has been engaged in these discussions and presents his ideas as a form of political theology most notably in his publication *God in Creation* (1985). He makes a useful distinction by outlining political theology as the internal critique of the modern world while liberation theology as an external critique of it.

More relevant to the North American context are the ideas of Robert McAfee Brown who has written many books, articles, and lectures on both the theology and praxis of liberation theology. His work *Liberation Theology: An Introductory Guide,* addresses specifically the topics most relevant to this discussion. His intended audience are middleclass congregations in hopes of providing them with the tools to begin to embody a new way of enacting faith. He calls for Christians to no longer be "servants in the pharaoh's court" by drawing on this Biblical image whether the pharaoh be the government, a CEO or the church (1993, p.120). His call for solidarity requires a building of consciously formed communities of committed Christians that speak the truth and take risks (1993, p. 118). What these notions introduce is the idea that even though people in the Global North may be a complex part of the system of oppressors and benefiting from that position, religious perspectives such as these may have the potential to mobilize people for significant change and disengagement of the status quo.

Another newly emergent form of theology is often referred to as ecoliberation theology. In response to the devastating effects that current projects of progress are inflicting on the natural world, a framework of liberation is being applied in order to garner the same response to a different but connected facet of oppression. Sally McFague's (1993) radical notion of aligning the concept of the body of God with the 'Earth' presents a new perspective on how we should revere nature. Other ecofeminists

such as Rosemary Radford Ruether (1992) discuss how women's experiences of oppression are creating new spaces for theology to move forward regarding the despoliation of the earth. She argues that an ecofeminist perspective has the potential to heal the earth because of the layers of unequal relationships it exposes between men and women, class, ethnicity and our collective relationship with the natural world. She remarks that a progressive Christian perspective is needed for "such healing is possible only through recognition and transformation of the way in which Western culture, enshrined in part in Christianity, has justified such domination" (p.1). This reflection of the larger role Christianity has played in helping to construct the values that the Global North is exporting in the form of economic globalization is also a critical part of the theological discussion.

Another pioneer of the ecological movement is Thomas Berry, a Roman Catholic priest who refers to himself as a "geologian". He is most known for his reconstruction of a grand narrative or creation myth of the universe in order to correct human relationships with the earth. For him, the main human task of the immediate future is to assist in activating the intercommunion of all the living and non-living components of the earth community in what can be considered the "emerging ecological period of Earth development" (1991). In a similar vein and after a comprehensive critique of global trends and their social and environmental impacts, Larry Rasmussen (1996) in *Earth Communities, Earth Ethics* states: "all citizens, bar none, are invited and urged to love earth fiercely and vow fidelity to it, to display sacramental sensibilities and covenantal commitment" (p. 350).

Many of these voices are responding to the reality that religious communities can unknowingly support the status quo. This is occurring either due to an absence of a critical analysis that highlights how Northern societies are wrapped up in and contribute to a global system of inequality and ecological destruction or, indifference to these realities. As Bruce C. Birch and Larry Rasmussen (1978) articulate, this is the 'predicament of the prosperous'. This observation has sparked theological works intended for middle class congregations in hopes of inspiring them to action.

While many are writing in this vein, Cynthia Moe-Lobeda (2002) addresses this conundrum poetically in her book *Healing a Broken World: Globalization and God.* She

presents the notion of *social amnesia* and how neoliberal ideologies have distorted consciousness through misleading ideas perpetrated by the people and power structures that stand to benefit (p. 48). As individuals are effectively removed from any sense of connection to inequality and injustice, *social amnesia* is an ailment of our collective consciousness in the Global North. Moe-Lobeda aptly describes this sad disjointedness by illustrating in the context of Christianity how many congregations are committed to local and international acts of charity but fail to recognize how their ways of life are fatally harmful to other people and the planet itself. She describes a congregation of this sort which parallels the lives of most North Americans whether they belong to a faith community or not as follows:

> The people of this congregation do not notice that with their SUVs and minivans, larger houses, and frequent travel, they contribute five hundred times more greenhouse gas per person than does the average Nepalese. They do not see that oil sustaining their lifestyle comes from the Niger Delta in African where Chevron, Shell, and Mobile are cutting down forests, polluting water supplies and air and "mowing down indigenous cultures and communities." The people of this congregation do not hear the voices of African people demanding oil companies to leave the delta or the Andean indigenous peoples threatening mass suicide if oil companies begin operations in their lands. Nor do they see the thousands of troops deployed to quell the protests in the Niger Delta (2002, p. 134).

Her analysis is a further attempt to illuminate many of these larger questions that face not only congregations but secular communities in the North who seek to enact change at the systemic level. It seems that while radical ideas such as these may be present in literature, the chasm between them and their translation into action remains both difficult and elusive. Nevertheless, this brief introduction to liberation theologies provides the basis for more fully understanding the context of how various Christian communities such as KAIROS are inspired and influenced by theological reflections which have often remained overlooked within mainstream academia.

3.3 Soul Care vs. Social Care

The form of Christian faith explored in this thesis is part of a liberal wing of Christianity, one that emphasizes orthopraxy over orthodoxy. While the theological writings discussed above represent a facet of this more liberal trend within Christianity, they are ideas that although included, remain on the fringe. Liberal Christianity is an umbrella term covering a diverse set of religious movements and sentiments beginning in the late 18th century. The term 'liberal' does not refer to a political agenda but rather the inclusion of Enlightenment sentiments that encourage freedom of thought and belief. In reference to the Bible, liberal Christianity looks upon it as a collection of narratives that explain, epitomize, or symbolize the essence and significance of Christian understanding, marking a move away from literal interpretations (Montgomery, 1970, p.57). This form of Christianity has been adopted primarily by the mainline churches (Protestant) and has sparked the development of views that are collectively moderate.

It is often easy to default into defining liberal Christianity in relation to its opposite, but even making distinctions through a binary lens can prove more challenging than helpful. The most obvious current of dualism that speaks to this divide implies that liberal Christianity is synonymous with the Christian 'left', and that traditional, conservative or Evangelical Christianity is aligned with the political 'right'. While somewhat correct the actual Christian landscape has a much more varied terrain and should be acknowledged as such. Due to this, the study will attempt to de-politicize the language used.

In light of this, and because of a focus on Christian responses to social issues, a useful framing (although still binary) is provided by Posterski and Nelson (1997) who distinguish between soul care and social care. They root the beginnings of this split in the context of the Great Depression as denominations in Canada chose to respond to the societal hardships in a number of ways. For the mainline churches this encompassed a move towards a social welfare approach motivated by secular notions of justice. In comparison, Evangelical churches responded to the social challenges differently by remaining faithful to their "soul work". Today they are still consistent with how they address social concerns, an approach that is based on a belief in how God works in people. So while mainline churches are more involved in changing society, Evangelicals look at social problems believing that personal conversion to Jesus will change the

individual. David Moberg explains this further: "[Evangelicals] believe all social problems are at root merely personal problems, Evangelistic Christians think that solving personal problems through converting souls to Jesus Christ will resolve the problems of the world" (quoted in Posterski & Nelson, p. 38). These divergent approaches to addressing social issues are arguably at the core of the Evangelical and mainline divide, and are deeply and historically rooted within Christianity's development in Canada over the past century.

3.4 Canadian Context

Although not as prominent in the cultural landscape today, the foundational developments of present day Canada (with the onset of colonialism) have been heavily influenced by various forms of Christianity. S.D. Clark even goes as far as to suggest that there are "few countries in the western world in which religion exerted as great an influence on the development of the community as Canada" (quoted in Posterski & Nelson, 1997, p.25). While he does not elaborate much further, this statement does serve in acknowledging just how entangled Christianity is within Canada's foundation.

The history of Christianity in Canada is vast and varied and so much of what is overviewed in this chapter highlights liberal Christian developments focused on socio-economic issues for the sake of clarity and succinctness. Evangelical trends in relation to the mainline churches will also be addressed along with a discussion around denominational decline and secularization in order to contextualize the religious landscape that KAIROS finds itself navigating. The discussion excludes other important narratives and histories such as migrant religious experiences and most importantly, the history of Canada's First Nations peoples and the central role that institutional forms of Christianity have played in their systematic destruction and assimilation. This horrific and often silent history has more recently been poignantly illustrated with the increasing number of residential schools lawsuits filed against a number of the mainline churches.[16] Thus, the complexity of religious expression even in Canada begs to be explored: how is

[16] While not discussed, much of this neglected narrative and the general neglect of marginalized narratives not only informs my position but also that of KAIROS and its members. However it is beyond the more limited purpose of this paper to treat these subjects adequately.

it that a tradition engaged in a form of genocide can also manifest a radical social gospel and everything in between?

3.4.1 The Social Gospel

A position well supported by other scholars, John S. Moir (2002) regards the Social Gospel as one of the most influential vectors in Canada's national development. With this being the case as Moir notes, it is therefore quite surprising that so little has been written on it. [17] In the limited research that does exist, it is described as a movement rooted in the late 19th and early 20th century that endeavored to apply Christian values to the social problems of the day. In its earliest manifestations, it was framed within a charity approach with a politicized angle only arriving as a later addition. It sought to bring society as well as individuals into conformity with the teachings of Jesus that now included Enlightenment notions of linear progress. It was only later in response to the Great Depression of the 1930s and the work of Tommy Douglas, that the Social Gospel became politicized as mentioned in the previous section. This was marked by the move from a charity model to one seeking to challenge the structural components of inequality, primarily through a socialist alternative to capitalism. This shift in understanding caused the previously mentioned divide as some churches began to emphasize the social side of their work ultimately eclipsing their devotion to 'the Gospel' in importance (Posterski & Nelson, 1997).

This politicization taking place in mainline churches marked the beginning of liberationist thought in Canada. In particular, Salem Bland, a theologian of that time published a small book, *The New Christianity*, which could justifiably be called Canada's first "liberation theology" text (Arnal, 1998, p. 133). Many of his Biblical interpretations can be found in current liberation theological reflections both within the South and North. Thus, the legacy of the Social Gospel together with theological developments, continue to shape and influence liberal wings of Christianity in Canada today. This commitment to

[17] The major Canadian work is by Richard Allen, *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada 1914-28* (Toronto, Toronto University Press 1971).

social justice is a current that runs in society through the work of various churches, activist groups and ecumenical coalitions such as KAIROS. [18]

3.4.2 Ecumenical Efforts

Until the formation of KAIROS, the ecumenical efforts in Canada around socio-economic justice issues have been primarily piecemeal and issue focused. The diversity of these endeavors became evident in the interviews conducted for this research as most participants could list 5 to 10 different faith activist organizations with which they have been affiliated over time. Regarding the creation of KAIROS, two of these justice oriented movements in particular, GATT-fly and the Jubilee Debt Campaign, are particularly relevant and will be discussed here.

After the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD III), members of the national staff of major Canadian church denominations met to formulate a collective response to trade issues. With UNCTAD III raising questions about the moral assumptions of the existing policy and effectiveness of Canadian foreign aid, one of the outcomes of this meeting was the development of a research facility which could help the churches participate more intelligently in aid and trade policy formation. Initially in dialogue with the government, this began to change as the group's analysis critically shifted to align with collectives in the Global South such as the Group of 77. No longer just a forum for understanding terms of trade, their view began to advocate higher commodity prices and firm agreements to support Southern access to Northern markets with an ability to maintain protection of home industries. This was also coupled with the desire to see development aid geared toward actual social programming. While also looking for structural reform of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Ruttan (1987) notes that "as the formation of the new project was being discussed in the Fall of 1972, it was clear that it would be an irritant to the status quo of trade and aid" (p.10). Thus in 1973 GATT-fly was born. Its membership included representatives from the Anglican, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Roman Catholic and United Church of Canada. Together with the expectation that the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)

[18] For a detailed account of the history of a politicized Christianity in Canada refer to Cole-Arnal, Oscar. (1998). *To Set the Captives Free: Liberation Theology in Canada*, Toronto, ON: Between the Lines.

would be a major focus for the project's work, along with a tongue-in-cheek Socratic reference, the organization committed itself to "[being] a gadfly, pestering the government on trade and economic justice issues".[19]

GATT-fly adopted the liberationist model of education which involved praxis-reflection-praxis. There was a heavy emphasis on Liberationist ideas, as words of Denis Howlett illustrate: "underlying our whole approach has been a theology strongly influenced by Latin American liberation theologians" (quoted in Cole-Arnal, 1998, p.140). GATT-fly used its research to lobby governments, provide data for progressive MPs, facilitate consciousness raising seminars, as well as to organize public support campaigns. In 1990, GATT-fly became the Ecumenical Coalition of Economic Justice (ECEJ) out of tensions between GATT-fly and the churches. These tensions included activists worrying about the watering down of their positions and the sponsoring churches fearful of the radical independence of GATT-fly. Regardless of the specifics, what remains important about the GATT-fly/ECEJ effort (now under KAIROS) is how it was successfully able to create awareness around trade issues allowing for individuals and communities to more fully participate and skillfully respond to the later aims of the Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative (CEJI). GATT-fly was crucial to CEJI's success in Canada because as one interview participant remarked, "it was the work of GATT-fly that created the space for people to understand trade issues and thus be able to relate to Jubilee's goals".[20]

CEJI was the Canadian wing of the global Jubilee 2000 Debt Relief Campaign, a movement highly regarded both within secular and faith activist circles. Jubilee 2000 was (and is) an international coalition which drove a valiant campaign that sought the cancellation of debt for poor countries in the Global South. The Protestant interpretation orchestrated it to coincide with the year 2000, the Biblical "Jubilee" year. Their impetus came from Leviticus (25:10) to "hallow the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all the inhabitants therof: it shall be a jubilee to you; and you shall return every man to his possession, and you shall return every man to his family." Also

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[19] This was a play on the Socratic gad-fly used by Plato to describe the irritating quality of Socrates' critiques of Athenian society.

[7]The successes of Jubilee 2000 often came up in interviews and its significance in relation to KAIROS is explored further in Chapter 4.

stemming from this Biblical Jubilee tradition rooted in Leviticus, Pope John Paul II announced a Great Jubilee for the year 2000 with his Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (*As the Third Millennium Approaches*) of November 10, 1994. Protestant and Orthodox Churches were invited to join the celebration of the Jubilee as a sign of ecumenical dialogue. In light of this, Jubilee 2000 was articulated in Catholic circles as a part of these efforts. This framing of a secular issue within faith language seemed to spur a momentum that had not existed around debt previously. It is important to note that before the advent of Jubilee, other secular organizations had been campaigning (somewhat unsuccessfully) around debt cancellation. But as Marshall (2001) notes: "the [Jubilee] campaign gained momentum and it swiftly caught the ear and imagination of many leaders (in churches, government, the arts and beyond). The result was a transformation of thinking and practice on international debt and progress toward debt restructuring that was barely thinkable only two years before." She goes on to add, "relationships with religious organizations will never be quite the same" (p.7). This 'success' was marked by the U.S. president at the time, Bill Clinton, signing a foreign aid bill fully funding debt relief to poor countries known as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). While not reaching the goal of full debt relief (which will be discussed later), the Jubilee Coalition certainly made shifts around how debt is understood.[21]

In Canada, CEJI was instrumental in public awareness raising and education, drawing on the foundations created by the efforts of GATT-fly. During its existence (before it was subsumed under KAIROS) CEJI published a number of books worth mentioning, *Making a New Beginning: A Call for Jubilee: The Vision of the Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative* (1998), *Making a New Beginning: Biblical Reflections of Jubilee* (1998), *Sounding the Trumpet: Education for Jubilee* (1998), and *Sacred Earth, Sacred Community: Jubilee, Ecology and Aboriginal Peoples* (2000).

3.4.3 The Canadian Maritimes

While Atlantic Canada as a region does not play heavily into the emphasis and themes drawn out in this thesis, it deserves mention due to the importance of it as the

[21] The Jubilee coalition is also an example of a liberal Christian development in Canada that has connected with similar visions and movements globally.

'local' context for many of the individuals interviewed and thus the direction of KAIROS Atlantic (the regional KAIROS group). The Canadian Maritimes has a rich and varied past of faith-based activism that continues to influence movements and communities today. In particular, two movements were often referred to in the personal narratives of the faith activists that were interviewed and will be touched upon here. While not a comprehensive depiction, the strands discussed illustrate how the politicization of the Social Gospel continues to influence communities of faith on Canada's east coast. From the historical Antigonish Movement to the present day global solidarity efforts of the Breaking the Silence Network (BTS), socially engaged Christians seeking to transform society are alive and well however small in numbers.

First and most importantly, the historian Oscar Cole-Arnal (1998) sees the Antigonish Movement of Nova Scotia as perhaps the most significant example of a faith based consciousness-raising group within Canada. This is a sentiment shared by Gregory Baum, a well known Liberationist, who described it as "the most original and the most daring response of Canadian Catholics to the social injustices during the depression" (Baum, 1980, p.191). The Antigonish movement was inspired by two men, Father J.J. Tompkins and Father M.M. Coady. They are described as having been greatly disturbed by the growing poverty and depression in the region during the 30s and 40s and in response, founded a movement that sought to enlighten fisher people and farmers about their economic situation and empower them to change it.[22] Recent scholarship also suggests that the movement arose in part from the threat of "Godless Communism" that was making inroads into local consciousness (deRoche, 2003, p.248). At that time the Communist Party was actively involved in addressing the economic depression of the region and thus was attracting members. Within this context, the Antigonish Movement provided an activist reading of the Gospel which created an alternative to the polarizations of day (capitalism and communism) stirring embers which were already active (McGowan, 2004). Although primarily situated within the Catholic Church, the movement was non-denominational seeking to transform people's lives regardless of their religious affiliation. It was a movement that tried to insert new principles in the

[22] For an in-depth history of the Antigonish Movement please see Alexander, Ann. (1997). The *Antigonish Movement: Moses Coady and Adult Education Today*. Toronto, ON: Thompson Educational Publishing, Inc.

present social and economic order based on alternative visions of society. As Baum states: "they in some significant way transcended the present order, undermined it and prepared people for a more radical reconstruction of society" (1980, p. 201). Although this movement faced challenges and a loss of direction over time, it is very much a part of a collective, historical narrative of the region that inspires individuals and communities to strive for transformative change. Ann Alexander (1997), an adult educator, exemplifies this in a concluding reflection on the movement: "[Through the Antigonish Movement] we may reawaken the vision of social movement concerns in those who have forgotten them and introduce such ideas to others who have never known of them. We may also find ways to act with the kind of initiative, risk and commitment that was characteristic of the Antigonish Movement" (p. 209).

In a connected vein of engagement, a current group called the Breaking the Silence Network in Nova Scotia is committed (along with other communities in Canada) to forging solidarity relationships with Guatemalans and their struggle for the establishment of democracy and peace in their country. BTS responds to Guatemalan reality by supporting human rights activists, peasant associations, communities of returned refugees and others who struggle against injustices in the region (Pierce & Kowalchuk, 2005, p.425). In the book, *Weaving Relationships*, solidarity activist Kathryn Anderson illustrates how faith and the motivation for progressive politics are entwined within these solidarity efforts. She describes it as an approach that generally represents a break with traditional notions of 'mission', a position that is not always accepted in the wider churches and parishes. It within statements such as these that echoes of resistance similar to the Antigonish Movement can be found in Nova Scotia today.

3.5 A Post-Christian Canada or Evangelicals Rising?

The previous discussion of secularization and religious resurgence in chapter two provides a sound base for delving into how these trends are expressing themselves within Canada. Beyond what may actually be happening, the story of religious decline is still dominant whether purported by the media, scholarly literature, or religious leaders. This perceived story is one that emerged quite often from the interviews conducted, generally expressed as a worry over denominational decline. Reginald Bibby (2004) who commits

to debunking this myth, remarks on how pervasive the myth has become as ""everybody knows" organized religion has pretty much had it" (p.8). He cites a 2003 national poll to make his point which claims that 70% of Canadians believe that new forms of spirituality are replacing traditional organized religion (Bibby, 2004, p.8). So why then are some academics, such as Bibby, proposing that Canada is experiencing a religious renaissance?

The more widespread narrative in attendance is one that gives the secularization thesis full reign over the present state of Christianity in the North which is most often characterized by decline. As Phillip Jenkins supportively argues, "over the past century massive secularization has seriously reduced the population of Christians whether we judge Christianity by general self-definition or else demand evidence of practice and commitment. Rates of church membership and religious participation have been declining precipitously in a long term trend that shows no signs of slowing" (2002, p. 94). This is indeed important when measured against the massive expansion of Christianity in the South that Jenkins investigates, but is the religious landscape of the North (specifically the Canadian context) more complicated than this analysis represents?

Through numerous publications over the past five years (including *Restless Gods*, 2002, *Restless Churches,* 2004 and *The Boomer Factor,* 2006) the veritable 'god' of religious trends in Canada, Reginald Bibby, has argued that a religious renaissance is occurring despite what people may think. Through extensive quantitative and qualitative research over the past decade and a half, Bibby has emerged with some convincing arguments and results to support this thesis. He observes that post-1960s, when religion was for all intents and purposes on the wane, large numbers of Canadians "kept on believing" (2006, p.187). As he states: "God has continued to do well in the polls. Belief in God has stayed fairly steady at 82%; the remaining 18% are leaning toward either agnosticism (11%) or atheism (7%)" (2006, p.187).

Of course this type of private belief can actually support certain proponents of secularization theory who regard religion as primarily a process within the public sphere. But Bibby further illustrates that in fact, the churches are still with us [23] and notes that it has taken "most of his career to figure it out" (2006, p.192). In comparing a number of

[23] In this reference, the term "churches" refer to religious groups generally including synagogues, temples, mosques etc.

Northern countries in 2005 by measuring the percent of the population that have worshipped over a six-month period, the United States comes it at 66%, Canada at 43% and Britain at 27%.[24] This figure has risen dramatically from Canadian statistics in the 1990s which indicated a significantly lower involvement. Taking these observations further by allowing church attendance to be considered "social engagement" (based on a Statistics Canada general survey 2003), then there is no single activity in which more Canadians are involved. Religious group participation (there are around 30,000 religious organizations in place second by a small margin to the sports and recreation sector) is slightly ahead of participation in sports and recreational groups, followed by union or professional group activities. Even involvement in school, service and political groups lags far behind (2006, p.193). As Bibby concludes tongue-in-cheek, "if this adds up to a bleak situation, one has to wonder what the Golden Age of religion in Canada must have looked like" (2006, p.194).

In light of this evidence that speaks to churches stirring, one would at least hope that the edges of our concretized myth of religion's decline would begin to blur, but that appears to not be the case. As this excerpt from Bibby's blog December 2007 indicates, it is a narrative that has its claws in deep. He reflects:

> The chimes of time ring out the news, another year is through. And the year-closing Christmas season would not be complete without the Canadian media's number one perpetrator of the secularization myth, religion writer Michael Valpy of the *Globe and Mail*, offering his annual proclamation of religion's demise. This year, the would-be news flash reads, "Churches come tumbling down" (December 22, 2007).
>
> Funny thing. Valpy never called me. He used to call me routinely. Come to think of it, he hasn't called me much ever since our enjoyable session over coffee at the paper in the fall of 2004, when we energetically and enjoyably debated the direction religion in Canada seemed to be going. Our affable conclusion was that I didn't believe his take on secularization and he didn't believe my data.

[24] These statistics comparing the US, Canada and Britain illustrate that religious trends are not as similar as the secularization theory would have us think. The US and Britain are significantly different with Canada falling somewhere in the middle and Europe being the exception.

> These days, as in his current "tumbling down" article, Michael ignores me and draws on others whose views are more akin to his. I'm crushed.
>
> Actually, I'm both envious and a shade frustrated. Michael is able to disseminate his views via the front page of a Saturday edition of the *Globe and Mail*, while I am left trying to get my side of the story out via this obscure blog. Who said life is fair (Bibby's Blog 2007).

What this reflection highlights is that it remains to be seen what will happen next in the religious landscape of Canada both within our collective narratives and what is actually occurring on the ground.

Additionally though, one aspect of these shifting trends that is beginning to become more prevalent and from a secularist standpoint, more perplexing, is that of the perceived rise in conservative Christian and Evangelicals groups. Bibby sheds a unique perspective on this other burgeoning myth, illustrating that they are not so much growing but rather that they are successful at retaining children as they grow up as well as members as they move from place to place.[25] In 1871 around 8% of the Canadian population fell into this category, a percentage that remains consistent today. Over time this has meant that while the net population has grown, Evangelical groups are not necessarily attracting an increasing percentage of Canadians. The secret to their success seems to be their emphasis on solid ministries to families and the overall result is that they have a much higher level of affiliate participation (Bibby, 2004, p.40). Thus, contrary to popular belief and widely held regardless, Evangelicals are not generally successful at converting or attracting individuals from other denominations.

However useful these statistics are, they do not address the ways in which the Evangelical faith is presently changing in Canada. Within the past decade, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) and other Evangelical groups are also shifting in how they response to social issues. The Micah Challenge, which articulates ties to the Jubilee 2000 initiative, is one example of this. The Micah Challenge notes in its mission statement that although Evangelical Christian organizations and local churches have

[25] These are two problematic areas for Mainline Protestants and thus why perhaps there is a slightly lower rate of consistent participation with one's parish, although individuals still heavily identity with the church itself. For example, in a survey on Anglicans, 80% who define themselves as "inactive" say that nonetheless being an Anglican is important to them (Bibby, 2002 p. 80).

made up a major contribution to direct delivery of community development and relief programs, they have been largely invisible as a political force on poverty and justice issues. Their efforts seek to the fill the gap. While not a Canadian example, Rick Warren the pastor at Saddleback Church in the United States also illustrates these trends within Evangelical movements. His current work is in Rwanda where he has partnered with President Kagame and Evangelical Churches in the US to help Rwanda become the first "purpose driven nation." This notion comes from Warren's recent publications which provide a framework to energize and engage Evangelical communities beyond their boundaries. These cases support an article in the March 2008 issue of the *Atlantic Journal*, entitled "Born Again", which engages these themes. Reflecting on the changing Evangelical terrain, Mead comments that moderate Evangelicals have always sought to preserve orthodoxy while engaging in modern life which is never static. He describes Evangelicalism today as "flexible and user-friendly" and goes on to say that "it has its core convictions: that a personal encounter with the risen Christ is necessary for salvation...but given [these] core convictions, this religious tradition seeks above all to be relevant, to be engaged, to reach sinners regardless of their culture, their ethnic background, or their politics (2008, p.24). In today's globalized world where collective social and environmental issues are becoming more accessible to individuals, Evangelical efforts are also endeavoring to provide a framework for people to respond.

So in sum, the two perceived vectors, that of the Evangelical rise and general trends of denominational decline in the mainline churches as a result of secularization, play heavily into common perceptions of Canada's religious landscape. Apart from what the general trends may actually be as discussed above, these narratives are deeply woven into the individuals and communities explored for this study and thus heavily shape their identity, commitment and understanding of faith.

CHAPTER FOUR

READING THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES: FAITH AS RESISTANCE

This chapter begins by introducing the organization KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives through a constructed narrative based on interviews and organizational documents. The rhetorical dimension that emerges portrays how KAIROS articulates its inception and mandate within the context of both real and perceived larger social, economic and political trends locally and globally. Themes threaded throughout the interviews and documents speak to the pragmatic and religiously situated nature of KAIROS' origin, the process of discerning an opportunity to act in response to socio-economic justice issues, as well as a current which reveals how KAIROS locates itself within a sense of historical rooted-ness in the Christian faith. These appearing motifs are framed by participants and documents in a way often referring to an assumed understanding of the difficult terrain that religion finds itself navigating in the contemporary, western world. In particular, these elements are directly contextualized in reference to globalization, fundamentalism, secularization and denominational decline. This collective narrative, which at times is fragmented, offers an entry point to further delve into the budding cultural dimensions of this form of faith expression by sifting through the stories of individuals and local communities within KAIROS. By also examining these mezzo and micro level narratives, this analysis lends room for probing the larger themes of faith, identity, community and resistance that are rising in a post-secular world. Thus, the overall purpose of this case study is to acknowledge a divergent, subversive narrative to those that dominate understandings of religion's interaction with modernity (with an emphasis on development) in a way that allows for developing currents and curiosities to surface and shed further light on the subject.

4.1 Opportunity Structure: Naming a 'Kairos'

Before delving into the rhetorical dimension of KAIROS, a general map of the organization along with its history is needed.[26] The story of KAIROS begins with the

[26] Because no previous research exists on the organization, this portion is being presented as primary research.

convergence of two 'vectors' in Canadian history. First, the turn of the millennium marked a watershed in Christian mobilization around an issue of social concern in the Jubilee Drop the Debt Campaign. The groundswell that developed in support of this movement illustrated what many Christians had envisioned and hoped ecumenical partnerships could achieve. As one participant remarked during the Atlantic Regional meeting in September 2007, Jubilee exemplified for her how ecumenical efforts could "capture the hearts and minds" of not only Christians, but secular activists as well.

Eventually Jubilee was subsumed under the umbrella of KAIROS when the organization was created. Consequently, KAIROS is seen by some as a continuation of this social justice oriented momentum which exists above and beyond denominational and secular boundaries.

At the same time the liberal Christian sphere was having a remarkable moment of social transformation with the 'success' of Jubilee, the mainline Canadian churches found themselves scrambling for funds. They had been maintaining a number of interchurch coalitions around justice issues but were having difficulty maintaining them as congregations and thus financial support continued to decline. These fiscal problems combined with the financial stress of the residential school lawsuits began to impact the social justice wing of the churches through the necessity of spending cuts. Mary, a long time faith activist from New Brunswick, sees the formation of KAIROS as being primarily due to this "climate of cutbacks". In the opinion of some such as Mary, this foundation does not bode well for KAIROS while others regard it as an opportunity. Caroline, an older Nova Scotian who has recently engaged in activism for the first time, expresses optimistically that "the limited dollars [are] causing people and churches to work together, whether they want to or not".

One staff member comments on these two intersecting factors tactfully recognizing the existence of various opinions held regarding the reasons behind the creation of KAIROS. In an effort to merge the two he remarks: "the unsustainability of the old structures, and the demonstrative wisdom of bringing them [the former coalitions] together through the Jubilee, converged in a moment with the creation of KAIROS."

Formed in July 2001, KAIROS is an interchurch coalition of various Christian churches and organizations within Canada that have united in social action efforts. One

of the foundation documents, *KAIROS: Another Kind of Time (AKT)*, articulates its purpose as such:

> KAIROS is a faithful and decisive response to God's call for respect for the earth and justice for its people. KAIROS and its growing membership, is dedicated to promoting human rights, justice and peace, viable human development, and solidarity. In KAIROS, the churches and religious organizations work together for justice, benefiting from collective discernment in responding wisely and faithfully to the signs of the times (KAIROS, 2003, p.2).

Although solely an organization of Christian membership, a diversity of denominational perspectives are involved with the mainline churches making up the bulk of participation (see figure 1.0 for a list). Thus, in its own words "KAIROS unites Canadian churches and religious organizations in a faithful ecumenical response to do justice, to love in kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (KAIROS, 2001, p.1). KAIROS brings together ten previous national ecumenical coalitions (see figure 2.0), each of which mobilized in response to a concern that communities and individuals deemed important.

Figure 1.0: KAIROS Partner Churches and Religious Organizations

Anglican Church of Canada
Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace
Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops
Canadian Religious Conference
Christian Reformed Church in North American (Canada Corporation)
Mennonite Central Committee of Canada
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
The Presbyterian Church in Canada
The Primate's World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF)
Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
United Church of Canada

Their work was broad, ranging geographically from the Americas (including Canada) to Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, as well as thematically on all of the issues KAIROS presently focuses on. KAIROS as continuation of these efforts currently works both locally and globally in the areas of international human rights; global economic justice (including corporate social responsibility, global trade and debt issues); ecological

justice; Canadian social development (including anti-poverty advocacy and funding, health care and refugees/migrants); aboriginal rights; global partnerships; and education.

Figure 2.0 KAIROS: Previous Inter-Church Coalitions

ARC: The Aboriginal Rights Coalition
ECEJ: Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice
ICA: Inter-church Action for Development, Relief, and Justice
ICCAF: Inter-church Coalition on Africa
ICCR: Inter-church Committee for Refugees
ICCHRLA: Inter-church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America
TCCR: Taskforce on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility
ICCE: Inter-Church Committee on Ecology
Benchmarks for Corporate Responsibility
TEN DAYS for Global Justice
Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative

But the transition of these former coalitions into KAIROS has not occurred without some difficulties. When asked about the early days, Andrew, a staff member, responds highlighting the existence of tensions:

> Transition into KAIROS has not been necessarily always smooth. There were early frictions in KAIROS around how to keep some work going, such as migrant and refugee issues. Also, the old coalition cultures didn't fit well into the new KAIROS culture. Some were more clearly denominationally affiliated whereas some were more separate like NGOs. To bring both together has meant some frictions which we are still trying to work out. The big question is how much do we have to adhere to denomination policy or move ahead and try to bring the churches along with us?

These intermediary challenges are tensions that remain today in KAIROS, a fairly young organization structured to include a variety of stakeholders. It is sponsored by the 11 previously mentioned Canadian churches (figure 1.0), each funds KAIROS and has a representative sit on the board of directors. At times, finding the ecumenical consensus to move forward can be challenging as Andrew expresses above. Whenever churches fundamentally disagree on issues, they work on them separately. A current example of this exists within KAIROS' present energy campaign where dissident positions on

nuclear power have resulted in a lack of consensus. Even the phrasing of KAIROS material can cause denominational discomfort and therefore is approached sensitively by staff. While challenges like these continue to exist, they are perceived to be outweighed by the benefits of people from "different theological stripes" coming together and "magnifying the currencies that churches have politically" (citing Andrew).

The organization has a head office located in Toronto, Ontario, with a full-time staff of 26, who work on the various issues for which KAIROS advocates. Based on volunteer membership around the country, Christians from various denominations run each regional cluster. These regional groups serve in linking social justice activists working on various issues in their respective areas and can be fairly independent from the central KAIROS organization.

Similarly, even within these networks tensions around autonomy exist in their relationship with "head office". Nevertheless, these are also framed in a way that regards them as helpful at the organizational level. A mentality of "don't look back to head office for everything" empowers regional groups to pay attention to their specific needs, one staff member observes. As one rural member from the Maritimes expressed after reviewing a KAIROS document, "I don't see myself here". Andrew reflected in response, saying "he's right, his experience is not our day to day reality and we don't probably give enough attention to it [rural issues]."

These challenges seem to inspire a sense of creative tension around dialogue that can positively shape KAIROS' priorities while holding the central organization accountable. In addition, independent regional groups, which have a rich local life, are observed as ultimately aiding national campaigns. As Theresa explains, "the more that they [regional groups] are engaged in their own communities the stronger they are at the global level. They have a clear sense of themselves and where they fit with us and there is an ease with that, particularly in Atlantic Canada."[27]

This thumbnail sketch of the organization and structure of KAIROS allows for the rhetorical and cultural dimensions of the movement explored below.

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[27] While this discussion demonstrates perspectives held at head office, regional voices will be acknowledged in the later section on the cultural dimensions of the movement.

4.1.1 Responding to Globalization

The Canadian KAIROS frames itself within an invitation to witness and pursue justice "in a time such as ours..." (KAIROS, 2003, p.1). This 'time' is one of a perceived insecure and volatile world which seems to be the pervasive, if not always articulated, point of departure for those involved with KAIROS. It is a world that is characterized by the process of neoliberal globalization and its coinciding destructive wake. These sentiments are expressed in the foundational document *KAIROS: Another Kind of Time.* It begins: "War, hunger, poverty and ecological degradation - when we pick up the newspaper and read the signs of the times, it is a perplexing and sobering experience. In this complex world, interpreting the present time without confusion or despair is an immense challenge" (p.1).

For Mary, a long time Maritimes activist, one of the reasons why she sees conservative Christian groups growing in number is because they can offer a rigid framework for how to live one's life in this increasingly "insecure world". When prodded to describe her understanding of how the world is growing more "insecure" she elaborates:

> We, [society] are afraid,...well the climate's changing and we're all going to die, terrorism, that someone is going to come and kill us, afraid of loosing our socio-economic status, we are afraid of the moral fabric of family disintegrating, identity theft, people who look different from me because we're all suppose to look the same, we're afraid of the water, health and hygiene, we are afraid of failing, weight gain...and its so debilitating.

For KAIROS[28], its communities and individual members, responding to the wider narrative of insecurity through an active justice approach rather than fermenting in fear around social, political, environmental and cultural issues is pivotal to its collective identity. Much of this approach is framed in a way that emphasizes a new sensibility of 'globality' (Leffel, 2007). This view is one where individuals and communities consistently relate to an experience of global conditions through a sense of interconnectedness. This ability to engage in a global vantage point has much to do with

[28] KAIROS in this portion of the discussion is used in full recognition of the diversity of communities and individuals it entails.

the onset of globalization itself, and KAIROS articulates itself within this emerging landscape. This was revealed in the responses of interview participants as they talked about issues which resonate with them the most. While each participant had a different topic or regional focus, each reflected a facet of a general global view in their response.

Gabrielle: What do you feel are the most pressing issues today?

Jake, a young theoretical physicist turned activist responded as follows:

> Larger structures of power and the relationship between the North and South...and the inability of Southern voices to be heard or the voices of marginalized people to be heard in a way that matters which leads to...very badly broken economic relationships...on a global level and I would see this repeated in macrocosm down to microcosm. Broken relationships coming from power imbalances... and I would see all these problems...as manifesting in any number of ways, trade policy for instance.

Theresa views things similarly:

> I guess that for me, I think that...so many people have been made anonymous in globalization. There are all of these tremendous advances, you know, umh, depending on how you define advance, right? But we have access to so many things here in the North, we always have but it seems like lots of stuff as a result of globalization...we have access to more things more things more things...things have become cheaper and more accessible to the middle class here...but there is all of this invisibility behind that. There are all of these invisible people behind that that are impacted, who either make it possible to have this because they provide cheap labour or have lost family farms to huge factory farms. So their invisibility is the worst thing, they are what everything we have is built on and we have no idea who they are...we need to help make these people visible, like what's the *real* cost?

These threads of informal understanding echo the foundational document, even by those who are primarily involved in local or regional issues. But, consistently conceptualizing local issues as globally connected can prove to be difficult as one staff member notes. Matthew, who works primarily on Canadian poverty issues, observes these challenges quite regularly:

> Most people understand that we live in a global economy and that our actions here in Canada affect peoples abroad. For instance, Canadian mining companies on Southern communities are having very negative effects...so that's a linkage...so the challenge is that people understand them as conceptually linked, but how do you advocate for...change at so many different levels at one time? I mean in a way, this is the constant challenge here...our advocacy needs to be focused for tangible results...but ultimately what we really want is fundamental transformative social change locally and internationally...so we advocate for Southern poverty and local poverty as a package, but it's difficult.

With this collective yet challenging point of departure based on the notion of global interconnectivity comes something else, a request to respond collectively. As the KAIROS document goes on to say: "As people of faith, not only are we to see and judge, but to dare to act for justice...If we are to discern wisely, speak boldly, and act decisively, where will we find our hope and strength? Who will be our companions?" (KAROS, 2003, p.1). Jake personally expresses that he views this particular time in history as unique, which is why a community such as KAIROS resonates with him. He remarks, "I fundamentally believe that we are at a moment in history that is ripe with extraordinary potential [for change] in society in general." It is within these sentiments that KAIROS situates itself as not only an organization but as a movement. It articulates its message as a call to action at this point in history, a time of *kairos*, "God's special moment of grace, truth and decision" (KAIROS, 2003, p.2). Thus an invitation emerges to act and it is one that is resonating within wider communities of Christians globally, each of which have grasped this notion of naming a *kairos*.

The concept of *kairos* is far reaching beyond this particular organization and is historically, Biblically and theologically rooted. The word is a transliteration of a Greek word for a 'special kind of time'. It can be contrasted with the Greek term *chronos* which refers to ordinary time or clock time which has a linear quality. In comparison, *kairos* in its meaning as holy or God-given time, is to be interpreted as a juncture laden with change where momentous things are happening. As Robert McAfee Brown describes it, "*kairos* is a time of opportunity demanding a response where God offers a new set of

possibilities and we have to accept or decline" (1990, p.3). There is a sense of urgency around declaring a *kairos* as can be interpreted in this Biblical passage:

> Jesus also said to the crowds, "When you see a cloud rising in the west, you immediately say, "It is going to rain"; and so it happens. You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time (the kairos)?" (Luke 12:54, 56).

It has an 'other' worldly dimension that is intangible, one that is rooted in a sense of sacredness. As the *AKT* document goes on to describe:

> Kairos is another kind of time altogether. It is not a human construct. It has nothing to do with clocks or calendars, but everything to do with the holiness of every moment. Rather than being measurable, it is mysterious. Instead of being predictable it is full of surprises, it is not so much inevitable as it is inexhaustible (p.1).

Thus, the notion of *kairos,* as interpreted in this instance, frames the current state of the world in need of response within a language of faith, connecting it to something beyond the world itself (similar to the idea of *Jubilee*). For the organization KAIROS, this concept "signals a time of injustice and new possibilities, a time of repentance, renewal and decisive action" (KAIROS, 2003, p.2). KAIROS in Canada has interpreted this time of global injustice and upheaval culminating in the ecological crisis as their call to action. As Andrew comments echoing these themes:

> I think we in KAIROS Canada do really believe in that... in that our attempts to read the signs of the times and, you know, the issues of the day, choosing where we are going to put time and effort is *really* an attempt to discern that, well you know, is this a situation where God is challenging us to be active?

However the adoption of the concept *kairos* to give meaning to the pursuit of justice is not new. Christians have sought to name moments of *kairos* throughout the past century. The South African struggle against Apartheid is one instance and evoked the publishing of the *Kairos Document* by South African Christians which spoke to these themes. This example serves as a powerful image of solidarity in opposition to unequal political, social and economic structures which were seemingly ingrained. In 1988, the

prophetic document *Kairos Central America* was born to speak out against civil war and US intervention while Asia and Africa contributed with *The Road to Damascus: Kairos and Conversion.* Another monumental publication emerged from Kairos/USA in the early 1990s entitled *On the Way from Kairos to Jubilee.* On the anniversary of Columbus' arrival to the Americas, groups of Christians took the opportunity to consider critically the impact of European Christian culture on indigenous peoples. This reflection linked domestic and global dimensions of oppression with *On the Way* pointing also to ecological issues as the "possibility of catastrophe at the heart of creation (Brown, 1993, p. 143)." In the late 1990s Kairos Europa entered the picture and in 1998 the *European Kairos Document* was published responding to the deregulation of the global economy and unequal trade relationships. It is within these loosely associated movements that KAIROS Canada situates itself.[29] In its own words "each community that has seized upon this image of *kairos* in word and action has contributed to the development of a living tradition. It is within this stream of faithful witness that KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives finds its place" (KAIROS, 2003, p.3).

While KAIROS can concretely link itself to other communities who have seized the notion of a time of *kairos*, its member individuals and communities often describe it as a movement primarily rooted in broader, older currents within Christianity. One participant spoke to this eloquently:

> There is a sense of being part of something bigger than you, and part of something historical, you know? Like a long line [laughs] a long tradition that you are carrying on, and not an unbroken line, and not a linear line, and not a perfect line, but, but a sense of something that has real roots and you know, has managed to hang on for a long time? 2000 years...

As will be discussed later, this sense of historical 'rootedness' was expressed in very unique ways by each individual interviewed. Likewise, some participants did not speak to this type of experience and so perhaps its absence indicates that historical roots are not necessarily a shared strand of experience for everyone. Nevertheless, feelings of historical connection surfaced often enough to speak to the existence of some sense of

[29] A global meeting of KAIROS movements has not yet happened but may be in the planning stages according to KAIROS staff member Andrew.

communally shared meaning, especially at the organizational level of KAIROS.

A more recent event that factors into the collective historical narrative of KARIOS is the Jubilee Debt Relief Initiative. Furthermore, it is evident that it has become embedded in the larger narrative of Christian social justice initiatives within Canada, continuing to inspire and provide a goal for future solidarity efforts. It represents a momentum that KAIROS endeavors to carry forward and one that reflects the importance of framing issues within a historical context. Theresa exemplifies this in her reflection on the Jubilee movement.

Gabrielle: Since you've mentioned it, can you tell me more about the Jubilee initiative?

> Theresa: Jubilee had tremendous symbolic resonance...we knew how to motivate people around a complex economic question, a question of faith and equity. People felt passionately because they understood it, they understood it as *part of a history that they were a part of as Northerners, but also a history that went back to their Biblical roots* [my emphasis] they understood the solution, they could look to their scriptures to see here is something we can do that makes sense!

For some, Jubilee's arguable 'success' indicates where KAIROS is in some areas lacking. For Andrew, Jubilee's theology really spoke to people: "They didn't just stick to the debt campaign but published books that looked at broader themes of redistributive justice...relative to the Jubilee movement where two books were published there has not been the same theological work done at KAIROS per se, and I think that's regrettable."

What these above examples all highlight are the ways in which KAIROS has contextually situated itself by identifying with traditions and past efforts that provide a framework for current meaning. First in naming an opportunity structure to respond to in globalization, framing that in a moment of *kairos* (a unique and lengthy tradition unto itself), and finally the ways in which KAIROS positions itself historically within broader Christian notions of social justice as well as more recent efforts such as Jubilee.

4.2 Rhetorical Framing: A Gospel Vision of Justice

It is within this perceived moment, a call to action where injustice is framed in faith language that KAIROS locates itself. From the contextual emergence discussed above, a conceptual architecture has surfaced enabling the naming of grievances and thus providing a framework for engagement. This ideological variable is one that clearly delineates itself as a particular form of Christian interpretation. Specifically, it is evident that the movement is seeking to redefine normative understandings of Christianity as much as they are looking to disrupt or change political structures. In particular, a number of themes appeared consistently (although with varied views) from the interviews including: the reconceptualizing of traditional understandings of development through differentiating between charity and advocacy, making space for marginalized voices, and redefining Christian engagement within the perceived trends of secularization and religious conservatism. Most of these were further underpinned with positive visions for the future. As a Christian social justice organization committed to "transformative social change" while battling normative assumptions about Christianity's role in society, their approach is often framed in comparison to views they do not hold. Throughout the narratives explored, a threaded theme that becomes apparent is how they define themselves in relation to these perceived normative understandings of how religion traditionally engages issues.

4.2.1 "Not a Charity Ethos"

High on the agenda for KAIROS is the move away from charity initiatives, the more traditional approach that churches have employed to address social issues. Historically, churches have often engaged in direct relief and development work within the missionary enterprise, an approach that is still the most widely used today. In comparison, KAIROS is an organization that supports the "consciousness that [is growing] about the necessity of addressing root causes of poverty and inequality" and regards itself "as a model of transformative faith and resistance" (KAIROS, 2001, p.1).

While Christian forms of resistance may seem odd in today's climate where the Church is viewed as status quo or irrelevant, KAIROS does not see itself as doing something particularly new. Movements seeking to challenge systemic issues have a

deep history within the Christian faith as evident in the previous discussions. When asked if KAIROS is articulating things differently in relation to more traditional church approaches to social issues, Matthew, a KAIROS staff member responded as follows:

> I mean I say yes, and no. Churches and church people have been at the forefront of every social justice struggle for the past two hundred years, so there have been Christians who have been at the forefront of engaging social justice issues and social justice transformation. But historically the dominant model is still the charity model...us helping them, rather than working for transformative social change [together]. I think we have a lot to learn from those living on the margins of society. So I think it's mixed, the split between the Social Gospel tradition...versus more the conservative Christian view which really emphasizes our personal relationship with God, [and] personal and moral issues rather than social issues. But KAIROS is rooted in the Social Gospel tradition.

While not to denigrate the importance of these traditional approaches to social issues(apart from potentially negative missionary zeal), Andrew, another staff member, draws on the prophetic role of the church to support a justice model. He observes that "when we see situations that manifest injustice we need to speak out about the causes of that injustice. Sometimes to name names of who are the perpetrators of that injustice..." For others like Theresa, this form of critical analysis which leads to addressing structural issues is framed within an understanding of faith that is defined in relation to other Christian interpretations:

Gabrielle: Why does KAIROS use an advocacy approach?

> Theresa: Well, we profess to follow Jesus, right? We profess to use him as our example...as an example and if you look at what he did it wasn't simply giving someone bread, it was making people realize that they had...that they were hoarding bread and that they could share it with people. It became about redistribution which is a justice issue...it is a different question than parceling it out...bringing people exiled back into community, choosing to walk with them. This is justice model not a charity model. So it is a way of reading the scripture, it is a more critical way of reading the scripture than in some church circles for sure. So what does that mean today? I

> think it means doing the advocacy, talking to governments so people can come back into the system.

In comparison, for Caroline the advocacy approach is not so much about the strategic nature of challenging structural issues. Rather, she sees it primarily as a more successful way to inspire others to participate in justice efforts.

Gabrielle: Why is there an emphasis on the role of advocacy within KAIROS?

> Caroline: Churches can become very comfortable, and churches can get very middleclass, wasp-ish, and they become very embroiled in their own issues. And these are issues which kind of encourage church members to look further, to look beyond the four walls of their church or their small community. And to see that they are a part of a bigger world and that although their little church may be shrinking in size or in numbers there is still a great deal that people can do. I think somehow the advocacy is the flame, is the fire that ignites peoples and if there isn't an advocacy part we wouldn't have much luck in lighting people's fire, if we were just a study group say that just learned about these things. I think that a lot of the social justice efforts in churches before were either straight charity, where money was collected for clothing or food, or people had a study group and learned about it but didn't carry it further. I think advocacy part of it empowers people to speak up... to make them understand that they can in fact make a difference. And that it isn't really all that hard once you get the hang of it. Change will never happen unless people speak up and not hide their passions under a bushel.

This faith based justice approach, articulated in relation to the more commonly favored charitable endeavors, also plays into how KAIROS frames marginalized voices from the North and South.

4.2.2 Space for Marginalized Voices in the North & South

A current that runs through this particular faith expression is one that seeks to recontextualize the relationship the church has with marginalized people in both the Global North and the Global South. The notion of 'solidarity' is used to indicate this shift in engagement.

In terms of the Global South, historically it has been engaged by the Church either through colonialism or similar ethnocentric forms of missionizing which can still be found today in various church based development efforts. Thus KAIROS is not only reframing an approach that champions advocacy over charity but is also redefining this component of past and current efforts. 'Solidarity' has been defined as such in the Strategic Directions and Strategies:

> KAIROS works with partners and colleagues in Canada and abroad such that...the churches strengthen their links with civil society organizations globally; the churches and Canadian policy makers increase their capacity for, and practice of, consulting partners in the Global South to better understand critical justice issues and formulate policy responses in the light of that knowledge (KAIROS, 2006, p.1).

Solidarity work and its associated language has become an integral part of what KAIROS does. As Theresa comments below, it is an inherited thread from the Jubilee movement, one that resides in a resistance approach:

> One of the strengths of the Canadian movement was the connections that we have with the Global South. We didn't, and this, and this is also a part of working on a justice model rather than a charity model...which is that we never assume we have the answer. We always went to our partners which we work with...in the South. Asking for their analysis of issues...and tried to inject their voices into Canadian policy.

In fact, Theresa felt that the solidarity component of the Canadian movement was somewhat unique and caused tensions among other Jubilee groups globally who wanted to celebrate success with the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. In Canada, Jubilee held a harder line to show solidarity with their partners in the Global South who did not see debt relief as actual debt cancellation and therefore not sufficient. While Europe was celebrating success, a member of Canada's main partner, Jubilee South said something that resonated with Theresa and others in the Canadian movement. This is how Theresa tells the story:

> [The member of Jubilee South] said: "This isn't a loaf, it isn't even half a loaf, it's poison crumbs!" We were friends with these guys and we would laugh with this a little bit [smile] but you know [pause] we couldn't quite go back to the Canadian public who had done all of this work and tell them "it's poison crumbs" but we also knew we couldn't go back to them and say that this was a victory, because it wasn't a victory. And so that was a point of conflict [with other Northern Jubilee efforts].

These examples speak not only to the centrality of solidarity work within the ideological bearings of KAIROS, but also to their endeavor to be more accountable to that process.

Besides, traditional charity models, even earlier forms of church solidarity work, evident in the Liberationist preferential option for the poor[30], were often inadvertently totalizing. KAIROS seeks to move further in its acknowledgement of this tendency by endeavoring to no longer speak on behalf of 'the poor' and 'the marginalized' of both the North and South. Instead they attempt to create space for a diversity of voices to be expressed without intermediaries. One staff member, Andrew shared a story which spoke to this shift when asked about solidarity work. For him, the main goal is to try and not bifurcate the message or voice. This has led to a recent brainstorming between himself and Matthew:

> We have this annual tradition...of when the House of Commons finance committee holds pre-budget hearings, if we get invited, as we usually do, we go and contribute what we would like to see in policy and Matthew said, you know, let's not send KAIROS staff to these hearings lets get members of local poverty groups to go and speak for themselves. They might not normally get an invite but the churches nationally do...it's another way of doing social action that is less paternalistic and helps people speak for themselves instead of us on their behalf.

But for one young activist, Jake, despite the efforts being made by KAIROS head office, he still sees problems within the representation of subaltern voices. In reference to the South, he passionately argues that KAIROS is not bringing dynamic active voices here to Canada, even when KAIROS has access to these voices. This is a larger critique

[30] See Gustavo Gutierrez's *A Theology of Liberation*. While this type of totalizing was never intended it was nevertheless adopted in Northern conceptualizations of the notion.

he offers of solidarity work that he feels manifests in KAIROS, one where the South "see us [the North] as an extractive industry of case studies" and, he concludes, "that is not solidarity." While often a dissident member of KAIROS he nevertheless supports the organization. In sum, he remarks on this commitment in relation to solidarity efforts:

> I critique KAIROS because I am enthusiastic about it. I wouldn't waste breath on it if I didn't believe in its potential and the people who work there...[but] there are huge representational issues which is...a major limiting thing if we are campaigning on behalf of the South or First Nations or whoever...and, and KAIROS in its partnerships with the South does some excellent stuff but there isn't the resources or the political will to get those representations of dynamic Southern voices out. The South is still silent and passive...

So even within these efforts of reflexivity around issues of power, paternalism and voice, some concerns exist. Matthew spoke to how it draws up issues for him around the historical role of the church and even how it is structured today which proves problematic in setting healthy precedents. In this vein he notes, "I mean, how you build a movement when member churches are hierarchical? How do you increase diversity when the hierarchy is traditionally male and traditionally white?"

These dissonant and fragmented understandings of solidarity and partnership speak to larger struggles even within secular organizations who are wrestling with the same issues. Effort to avoid any flavour of paternalism that still reside (intentionally or not) in some Northern approaches seems to be a never ending process. For a faith-based organization deeply situated within a tradition that has been part of oppressive historical structures, this task seems even more crucial and sensitive to accomplish.

4.2.3 Redefining Faith and Visions for the Future

Another component of the developing conceptual architecture of KAIROS endeavors to redefine faith both currently and in the future. While it was not always overtly expressed in interviews, each participant's narrative of faith was often situated in reference to popular notions of how religion is perceived in Canada and contemporary Western society. Frequent references to themes such as declining congregations, the

notion of a post-Christian world, defining a justice approach in relation to charity, and a sense of a loss of a values narrative in secular society, all indicated this. Yet, according to Bibby, (as discussed in Chapter 3), the religious landscape in Canada is not so much declining as it is shifting with fruitions of faith occurring in other ways. Regardless of these 'facts' it is evident that KAIROS and associated individuals still see church decline as a reality of the world in which they live and are engaged. While these themes are evident in the discussion above, it is within this section these common strands will be given more attention with a view to how it relates to visions for the future.

After reflection on how these motifs were emerging unprovoked in interviews, I chose to directly address them as the research process continued. Andrew's response succinctly summed up these emergent themes:

Gabrielle: What are some of the popular notions about Christianity or religion that KAIROS comes up against in its work?

> Andrew: I think there is a popular notion in Canadian society that those well meaning Christians are quite naïve and its fine if they go ahead and do their charity work but they really shouldn't be involved in politics because that's really not what the church[31] is about. Whereas my theology and the theology of KAIROS is that being involved in this way is very central to our faith and understanding... [also] there is a current in Canadian consciousness that sees the secularization process having advanced so far that churches are irrelevant, and don't have the political weight anymore or voice that they once had...so we live in a post-Christian society...

The more tangible effects of a perceived declining church can be seen quite closely at the KAIROS head office. The downtown Toronto church that their offices are presently housed in is being closed. This is not an uncommon occurrence in a city where the newest, trendy condo developments are renovated churches.

Thus, reframing the trend of declining congregations is an important factor shaping the KAIROS identity. After the interview with Andrew, he gave me a copy of a newspaper article that had been circulating around the office which was resonating with staff around this concern. This *National Post* article (2007) entitled "Survival of the

[31] "the church" refers to an understanding of Christianity collective outside of institutional expressions of faith.

United Church Not a Priority" explains how the leader of the United Church, David Giuliano, sees the Church as "too preoccupied" with protecting its buildings, counting its money and recruiting members. Instead, he goes on to remark that "it should devote its energies to helping the poor, the hungry and the sick beyond its walls." Sending out a letter to congregations across the country, he urges them to worry less about "buildings and budgets" and to engage in the suffering evident in the world. As he notes, "Our hope is not for our survival or even growth." He prays that "our preoccupation with getting people into church is transformed by a passion for getting the church out into the world."

It is evident that this reframing of "church decline" is being adopted by those affiliated with KAIROS and the organization itself. As Andrew explains:

> [Decline] in some ways frees up the church to be prophetic, to try to go back to its roots of community of believers who are in the world but not so much of it, who stand over and against the values of the dominant society.

Curiously Farida, an immigrant from Kenya, seemed to be the only one whose perspective aligns with Bibby and his argument that congregational decline does not indicate a trend in secularization (2004). When asked about the present state of religion today she responded that although religion is being given a hard time, "I don't think negatives reduce the number of people who believe in God, but it might reduce the number of people in church."

Within these worries of denominational decline, another reference point for identity formation within KAIROS is an underlying acknowledgement that conservative Christian groups are growing. When questioned about whether or not KAIROS is growing or declining, Caroline, rather than answering the question directly, immediately referenced the Evangelical churches remarking: "I think we have to look at what the Evangelical churches are doing because they are growing!" The growing sense of insecurity in a global world that Mary spoke to earlier and the subsequent search for community seems to answer this question for Matthew:

> One of the reasons the [Christian] 'right' has been so successful is they welcome people, it is about community, and people are yearning for genuine connections. The problem is that's all they do. It's a doubled edged sword where there is a sense of a distinct experience of

> insider/outsider. What they touch on is that people want community and a sense of connection with people.

Even these trends are being framed in a positive way despite the divergent nature of conservative approaches to social issues in relation to KAIROS. Andrew, who works primarily on Canadian poverty issues, has found more recently that Evangelical Christian groups want to do more advocacy work around poverty and so KAIROS is working in collectively engaging their efforts. In particular within the conservative climate of the current Harper government, he notes that the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada has connections with conservative members of parliament that KAIROS would never have. Still, there are some issues that collective work would not be able to happen around due to various interpretations of faith. Matthew skillfully articulates these challenges:

> I sort of don't feel like we [KAIROS] have all the answers and they are totally off track. I sort of feel like, I can't agree with some of their positions but I still have something to learn...where it does get into problems is when the discussion is closed, when the text becomes the truth...the one and only truth... so, I don't know...

Another component of the rhetorical framing of KAIROS and individuals engaged in this type of activism, is conceptualizing visions of the future to work towards. These images go far beyond the organization level and are often directed towards the broadening of socio-economic justice ecumenical efforts globally. This illustrates once again, the burgeoning mentality in civil society which reflects a sense of 'globality'. These futuristic projections also speak to an envisioned general role of the Christian faith within the emerging contours of a global landscape and its collective problems. Some have high hopes for the church in paving the way with new visions of an equal and better world, while others have little regard for the possibility of the institutional facets of the church ever becoming transformative leaders of change. Here some activists share their views on these motifs:

Gabrielle: What do you see as the role of the Church today?

> Theresa: I guess I think I see their social role, what they should be doing...is thinking outside of who they are... thinking outside of survival. Christian churches, right, are supposedly in decline. Although I go to a church that sort

> of busts those, ah, perceptions so I probably have a bit of a skewed look on things [laughs]. But demographically churches are in decline and I think they need to get beyond that and be a voice for peace, a voice for change...for churches to be what they are meant to be, which is some kind of witness.[laughing] Problem is it sounds too jargony!

Compared to Theresa's view, Matthew's perspective is less about envisioning results through a modified social role for the church, and is more philosophically built around a notion of what he articulates as faith going "beyond the political". What he argues is that currently a "values narrative" is missing in governance and in society, but it is within faith that a values narrative can be reshaped and cultivated. He reflects on how he used to be more focused on advocacy and policy change because he felt they could have substantial results, but more recently his perspective has shifted. In his own words he explains this as follows:

> Jim Wallis[32] talks about this, he sort of says that if you focus all your effort on changing policy then, well, policy changes with the wind, okay so we might get a good policy but then the wind is just going to blow back. So what he is talking about then is changing the way the wind blows, so he's talking about a more fundamental change, changing what we value...changing what we prioritize in our lives.

Continuing on, he remarks that the church "understands a values language, can raise a values language and they can challenge politicians on a set of values."

On a more pragmatic level, the churches are in position in which to mobilize for these shifts to occur. According to Andrew, "half of the food banks [in Canada] are out of churches." For him, not only is this social capital of the churches throughout the country useful, but it also means that "they have some sort of contact with people in the margins and have legitimacy in that because they are on the ground." Earlier discussions in this chapter also alluded to this aspect of established church infrastructure as a strategic tool for change. For instance, Matthew's brainstorming around sending anti-poverty groups to the House of Commons pre-budget meetings reflects this. Andrew also

[32] Jim Wallis is an American Evangelical minister, an author, and the founder of the well known *Sojourners* magazine. While he shucks political identification, his views resonant primarily within liberal Christian circles due to his advocacy work around peace and social justice issues.

addressed this in comment explaining how KAIROS sees the institutionalized nature of the churches in Canada as helpful in providing access to government and the status quo. It is access that very few civil society groups have.

Not all of these visions for the future are far off. For some participants, the new energy campaign KAIROS launched in 2007 is resonating with them in a profound way which they also see occurring in others. Many appear hopeful that this issue will mobilize people because it seems a more tangible concern, one that people are connecting with personally as they see it more in the media, in international politics as well as Canadian policy and party platforms. Here is a sampling of responses indicating this when individuals were asked about the new campaign, *Re-Energize: Time for Carbon Sabbath.*

Gabrielle: How do you feel about the new energy campaign?

> Theresa: I think it is something that people see everyday, and it's in the news everyday...the challenge is to help people to see it as more than an ecological crisis and see the work we are doing as more than that, it is where all of our work comes together. It's challenge to articulate that though.

> Andrew: This is going to be the nexus of, I think, of some important revival. Certainly ecumenically whatever the tensions and disagreements may be in the churches and they don't go away, these are issues we can unite around. And, my sense is that we're beginning to enter a phase where these issues bring us together and we are going to have more people involved I think. I'm hopeful anyway.

At some point in every interview, climate change was articulated as a central concern and focus. It is obvious that people do feel a connection to it within their personals lives and feel empowered to do something about it. Mary and Glen, a couple interviewed who live in New Brunswick exemplify this. The interview took place in their newly built, passive solar heated home which they invested in to "live out their values." This is just one illustration of how ecological issues seem to encourage people to feel more empowered to address personally. This position was shared by all those interviewed and lends itself to supporting Andrew's comment above.

In comparison, while there are hopeful visions for the future, a number of participants adamantly stated that they did not see the institutional church ever being a leader in transformative change. As Glen sees it, "climate change is going to force change" but for him he still sees the church as part of dominant society which is invested in perpetuating the status quo. Glen position aligns with Jake who sees in particular, the "pews and status quo", he states:

> The church is not going to make the radical change that is needed...although those of us who are social activists within the church would love to see the church be much more activist and to take the initiative to do that, chances of that in the next while, until a major crisis comes along is poor. It's going to follow society not lead society, that's why its important for those of us to find networks outside of the church like KAIROS.

While a variety of narratives surfaced throughout the research process regarding the rhetorical dimension of KAIROS, what remains evident is that each individual, whether staff or individual member, believes in the general vision of its approach. Whether or not the wider institutional expression of the church will embody it in the future is another question. As Mary said, holding these two competing tensions at once, "we are the leaders we have been waiting for and the time is ripe to respond. I don't think the church is necessarily looking at that but every inspiration is there, every role model is there for what we need to be doing." Thus from here, notions of action, identity, and efforts to resituate faith as resistance enter the equation at the personal level.

4.3 The Cultural Dimension: A Collection of Individuals

While the previous discussion highlighted a macro view of KAIROS contextualizing it within various global and Canadian trends (whether perceived or real), this portion of the research findings will navigate the ground level terrain of faith activism as expressed through KAIROS communities.[33] A picture will be drawn illustrating some common points of cultural cohesion within the movement including how its form of activism is articulated in relation to secular approaches, the role that community plays in supporting

[33] And in particular Atlantic Canada, a primary site of research.

everyday forms of resistance, a shared experience of wider marginalization in faith circles, and a trend towards individualistic faith expression that emerges from the data, reflecting a wider current cultural narrative. It is through the raw stories present in these individual narratives that questions of faith, identity and community are explored in relation to activism. They seem to be important sites of identity navigation and resistance which speak to the need for the existence of similar spaces far beyond the boundaries of KAIROS.

One particular observation on collective culture gleaned from research helping to frame the discussion is that KAIROS occupies a space somewhere between an institutional organization and a movement. Rooted in organic momentum such as Jubilee, while also being partnered with churches, has caused some difficulties around building a coherent movement. In this vein, the challenge around merging former coalitions under KAIROS is also a concern widely expressed by staff. For regional activists though, identifying with KAIROS directly does not appear as a high priority. Many of the older activists define their experiences primarily through other movements in which they have participated in thus regarding KAIROS as a continuation of these efforts. It is viewed primarily as a site which provides a framework for response within a supportive community of faith.

Some of the challenges in creating cultural coherence may be due to geographical limitations as it is hard to build a collective culture within such a large country as Canada. This is an opinion held by Matthew who reflects that "if we want to build a national movement it is hard to do so from Toronto, we really should spread staff around. Presently people don't feel connected to us." This desire, Matthew expands, comes from a belief that there are people out there wanting to be engaged in a new way and are looking for meaning. "They are in churches and they want to be engaged on real issues. I think that what we are doing does resonate with people but the structural challenge of being based out of Toronto..."

Regardless of whether or not a coherent KAIROS culture will form over time what individuals, regional groups and staff can all agree on is that KAIROS offers a space of community and faith where individuals can negotiate their identities as Christians, activists, Canadians, and global citizens. It is space that is offering alternatives in living

out values which dominant society may not support. As Glen expresses, "KAIROS and its communities provides a base where when people feel they need to do something, it provides a vehicle and gives direction. It gives a framework and an opportunity to respond." In this way, KAIROS communities are less about KAIROS and more about spaces of resistance framed in faith that act as a container for individuals to feel supported as they navigate a spiritual path that is defined through their activism.

4.3.1 Demographics

In order to contextualize the stories of the activists that have been introduced, the demographics of KAIROS communities and who they attract is crucial to the discussion. As was previously highlighted, perceived denominational decline, starkly illustrated by a syndrome of emptying pews, is a central component of the Canadian religious landscape and in particular, for the mainline churches. As the KAIROS board is primarily composed of these denominations, it is a trend that is on the lips of KAIROS staff and regional communities alike, especially around membership. Numbers of individual KAIROS members are hard to pin down and it is not a priority for the organization to track them. Apart from the 27 staff, there is a board, various program committees and working groups indicating another 100 people from the churches who are formally involved. There are roughly 80 local KAIROS groups across the country but with no structure dictated by head office (an intentional choice to maintain grassroots leadership) it is once again difficult to get a clear picture as to the amount of people participating (personal communication with Andrew, March 2008). Local congregations also pick up KAIROS work which can include ordering campaign resources or giving donations who are not affiliated directly with a local group. The website has millions of hits per year but is also not an overly useful indicator for membership as one staff member communicated. She further remarks: "that's the reality of grassroots groups I guess...." Andrew additionally reflects on membership highlighting the poignant questions: "there is the imponderable question of how far KAIROS reaches into the life of the churches? In particular moments whole congregations may pick up a piece of KAIROS and work and act on it, but their numbers...?" With membership elusive, in part due to the ebb and flow

of particular campaigns, what remains constant is how KAIROS facilitates spaces of faith, 'containers' so to speak, for people to navigate these issues collectively.

Apart from numbers, the most direct and intimate description of KAIROS demographics comes from observations made during fieldwork at the KAIROS Atlantic regional meeting. An annual retreat that took place in September 2007, brought the community together for a weekend of reflection, sharing, and planning. The weekend was in full attendance with barely a bed left empty in the residences at the Tatamagouche Centre, Nova Scotia. This was unprecedented in the history of KAIROS Atlantic, with fifty people from around the region present. Being privy to the regional board meeting at the end of the weekend, I observed that out of the 23 people present, 16 were female and 7 were male. The most surprising aspect was the range in age from a handful of people in their twenties right up to individuals in their 80s. The presence of an older demographic is not astonishing due to the aging of mainline church populations, but is remarkable when compared to the general age groups of secular activist communities. In responding to the question as to what type of people KAIROS attracts, Matthew noted:

> I think it's really a mix. I think in some communities they are quite strong and they have been able to bring in others [new members] while others have the same people. Churches are aging, mainline churches, so that's an issue in terms of who we are reaching if we are going through the churches...we are not reaching young people, immigrants...

This lack of diversity is worrisome and has shaped KAIROS strategic planning accordingly. With particular concern around their relevancy to youth, the most recent strategic plan (2006-2010) articulates that KAIROS is intent on "strengthening [their] networks across Canada with an emphasis on engaging young Canadians..." (KAIROS, 2006, p.2). Jake echoes this concern and sees KAIROS as really failing at attracting youth but feels that this reflects a broader malaise within Christian denominations. Farida on the other hand, a graduate student and in an official capacity to reach out to young people in Nova Scotia through KAIROS, remarks that she feels it would attract more youth if they knew about it, a responsibility that she has taken on with another graduate student in Halifax.

Another concern for some participants is that the pew continues to remain "status quo" and is "not ready" which means little hope for recruiting members. While they support KAIROS for continuing to advocate through congregations and parishes they do not necessarily regard it as a successful way of cultivating numbers or support (this will be explored further as experiences of activists feeling marginalized in the church will illustrate). For Andrew at head office, numbers matter very little. His vision is one of "organic growth rather than expecting people to flock to meetings."

Puzzled by the query as to who an organization like KAIROS attracts, one research question was constructed in an attempt to shed light on the matter by asking individuals if they were attracted to activism through faith or brought to faith through activism. The results were mixed. Participants had very varied narratives tracing the journey of their life up to their involvement with KAIROS. For some, faith has been so inextricably linked with who they are from birth, that the development of activist leanings has been framed within their beliefs. For others, their faith has always been linked to social justice through mentors in their lives, in communities or individuals that "to separate them would be a contradiction". For others, it was the encountering of injustice that politicized their faith, as it did for Farida who witnessed war in her home country of Sudan and was forced to flee to neighboring Kenya. A divergent narrative is also present indicating for a select few that through the engagement of justice issues in secular groups, a longing for meaning developed in them leading to an exploration of faith in relation to their activism. A number of them saw this "search for meaning" as a reason to reengage the faith of their childhood or faith for the first time, in order to make sense of the world in light of observing the existence of unjust systems. For Theresa, in re-exploring her faith in relation to social activism in her twenties, she remarks that for the first time her faith expression seemed acceptable to others:

> I suppose in a way I felt a little bit funny going back to church in my twenties when I was in grad school. Grad school was...there certainly weren't a lot of people who went to church or if there were they didn't admit it...but if I thought about my faith in terms of social justice it was an acceptable faith to have. Maybe people wouldn't think I was quite so weird if I was church-justicy. And then I began to understand faith as a struggle.

In essence, it is evident that numerous factors contribute to who is attracted to a community such as KAIROS. While not a burgeoning movement in the traditional sense, there does seem to be something stirring as KAIROS continues to get its feet on the ground. This is reflected in small ways such as the unprecedented attendance at the Atlantic regional meeting. Interestingly, what a small but growing membership might indicate is that people of faith who still believe in God may be looking to fulfill there faith needs in communities beyond their traditional denominational congregations. Also, it may support Bibby's argument that people are not necessarily less religious today but rather that they are looking for new avenues and ways of expressing their faith as the traditional structures of church and community continue to loose their relevancy. For those in KAIROS, they have found a way to "reinvigorate their faith." This is a key point in delving into how these activists compare secular activism and faith activism, because as one participant remarked: "our call is to be faithful, not necessarily successful."

4.3.2 Faith Activism: A Wider Invitation to Make Change?

For activists who see their work as grounded in their faith, it becomes clear that it is often defined in relation to secular forms of activism, although not necessarily overtly. As previously mentioned, some individuals came to faith through their engagement with social concerns or were involved in secular groups, and therefore have tangible reference points to contrast their experiences. Overall, the general sentiments were ones that did not see secular activism as lacking but rather, that some activism rooted in faith could positively contribute to furthering the efforts occurring in the secular sphere.

Something frequently mentioned was the commitment that faith communities provide in sustaining support of social responsibility over the long term. While living in the United Kingdom, Jake observed that "there may be initial inertia but once they get going [people of faith] they will be there for the long haul." Referring to activists in the United Kingdom he observed that faith communities are the ones who are "there solidly even when it's not sexy, even when it's not the issue *de jour*." As Glen maintains, this is because where secular activism is governed by analysis, faith activism also includes

compassion and solidarity rooted in collective understandings of faith which leads to a lengthier engagement.

In other ways, faith activist communities are viewed by participants as contributing more to the general movements afoot which address global issues, particularly by offering more in the realm of identity and inclusion. A current that surfaced held that presently many individuals who are not "young, leftist, hippies or radicals" do not feel as though they can participate in more visible forms of resistance and activism. Matthew shared a story that highlighted this, as well as the role a faith community can play in filling some of the gap.

In 2001, protesters gathered in Quebec City to vocally resist the implementation of the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA). As Matthew tells it, buses were organized from Toronto to Quebec City for those who wanted to participate, he remembers:

> I knew a lot of people with faith backgrounds wanted to go but they weren't necessarily comfortable, I mean there were a lot of young people who sort of brought a lot of wonderful energy but also, who, you know, people of faith, 60,70,80s year olds or whatever didn't totally connect with, they wanted to go but they wanted to have a community of people to go with...so I ended up organizing "faith buses"...

This aversion to the commonly understood activist identity is one that Caroline, a Nova Scotian activist in her mid-sixties, articulates as the reason why it took her so long to get involved in a social justice approach in the first place. In fact, the existence of activist stereotypes is a particularly difficult stumbling block that KAIROS continually encounters when reaching out to the pews. This thinking surfaced clearly when Caroline was asked the question:

Gabrielle: How has your understanding of social issues changed or stayed the same in relation to your affiliation with KAIROS?

> Caroline: This community gives permission to make changes, they may not be mainstream but say, you're not a hippy if you go to solar energy, and it's okay to participate

> in a rally or protest [laughing] I would NEVER have done that but now I am okay with it.

Later in remembering protesting the Iraq War in Halifax she echoes similar sentiments:

> ...And standing right in front of us were the anarchists with their black outfits on and their flags, and we just happened to be positioned right behind them [laughing]. And I thought, if my mother could only see me now, walking with the anarchists up Spring Garden Road! There was a time I never would have done that but now I have no problem with it...it's okay, your living out the gospel, it gives you permission to change...ordinary people can take part, [smiles] its not just crazy students from Dal [the local university]...

Mary's opinion aligns with Caroline, for her a faith community based on activism is "about supporting you so don't feel so crazy..."

Often how individuals talk in relation to how they act do not always align, but it does appear that these faith spaces are aiding people to engage in "everyday forms of resistance", especially around the issue of climate change and environmental sustainability without feeling "crazy". These undeclared, disguised and low profile forms of resistance which do not engage in formal political structures, and are therefore often not seen in a political light, can be transformative momentums building under the radar (Scott, 1990). Illustrating this potential, it was unanimous among the participants that through their affiliation with KAIROS they are changing their lifestyles according to their investment in ecological issues. Some examples range from Mary and Glen's passive solar home, to individuals choosing to rely on public transit over their vehicles, as well as a growing involvement in local food movements and food security. These efforts were all also marked by a general disengagement from the normative consumptive lifestyle model (see in reference to the earlier discussion on the KAIROS Energy Campaign). In this way, a faith community of resistance offers the permission for change outside of the usual identity politics that are more visible in society. Of course, this expression of activism does not resonate with everyone and not all people of faith either. As Theresa reflects, "for me it's a way of recharging...but you know, I may have found this with the right bunch of secular activists..."

So while activism may be strengthening the faith of individuals it is not always necessarily leading to a closer connection with the church. For some, expressing their politicized faith is wedded to an experience of marginalization in their home congregations. Jake personalizes this trend remarking that "the Presbyterian Church has a tradition of quietly chasing away activists, never overtly but always quietly." This current within social justice circles is referred to as the "ghetto-ization of activism". Caroline, once a typical congregant at her local parish, remembers how she used to view members who were activists. She describes how at one point she was almost fearful of them remarking that "they [activists] are often treated with suspicion." Thus, for many, KAIROS represents a space of alternative prayer that focuses on social justice in a way that is absent in their home congregations. This move, once again, seems to indicate that mainline parishes are not fulfilling certain aspects of spiritual expression for their members.

Despite these experiences in mainline churches, Jake feels that the Biblical narratives leading to participation in justice rather than charity efforts cannot be ignored. For him, the difficulty lies rather in the inability of the "activist ghetto" to communicate with other believers. As Caroline further explains:

> You can't hit people over the head. Sometimes they can feel as though somehow they are being pushed and shoved in a direction they might not necessarily want to be pushed and shoved in. I think it's not the activists, it's the way the story is being told...you can't punish them for being in a different spot, you want to encourage they to come along, rather than crucify them. You need be careful when speaking in churches and how you carry the message.

Thus a prevalent experience among people who become more enmeshed in issues of justice is that they feel misunderstood and alienated, finding it hard to commune in their denominational homes. Furthermore, it becomes evident that while KAIROS serves as an alternative site to express this side of their faith, the call to communicate with the pews is also a necessary and continuous challenge.

In addition, even within the faith networks of activists that have been created, a number of individuals expressed feeling a disconnect from these circles. For Mary, KAIROS is "not radical enough" leaving her still feeling isolated despite its efforts to

build communities which seek to support her. What is particularly relevant here is that through this experience, Mary further expressed that ultimately she perceives her journey of faith through activism as deeply individual and personal.

This is where the cultural ingredient of individualism seems to be heavily at play, perhaps reflecting the larger trend of individualism in Western/Northern society. A structured interview question which sought to investigate the components contributing to each individual's faith perspective uncovered this. Very rarely did any of the authors, theologians, or mentors mentioned by participants cross over between individuals apart from the Bible reflecting how personalized their worldviews are. When asked about the theology of KAIROS very few knew its foundational bearings, including some of the staff. Yet, there is still a sense of connection through a general understanding of faith that unites them in their efforts. This individualization of a spiritual journey through activism is unified in its adherence to faith, however loosely understood, which indicates that KAIROS is a site where diversity of expression is accepted. Again, this may point to Bibby's predictions that the traditional format of church, where one frame of faith is offered, is no longer relevant to people's lives. It marks a shift in worldview from communal understandings (which the church is built on) to more individualistic expressions of self.

This trend towards individualism is often articulated as a problematic component of the contemporary Western world in relation to activism. But as an interesting study mentioned in the review of literature illustrates, contrary to common perceptions of individualistic culture as being inherently problematic for efforts to address the common good, the pursuit of self improvement and growth could in fact aid these endeavors (Lichterman, 1996). The study, which looks primarily at secular organizations, comments that religious communities are still structured in ways that emphasizes traditional notions of community. However, what emerged through this study of KAIROS is that faith spaces may also be reflecting larger societal shift towards individualism as it is not a traditional faith model. No longer are all individuals feeling confined to their denominational homes; in this regard they are seeking out other faith spaces separate from traditional sites of religious worship in order to find a community that resonates with them. Furthermore, indirectly supporting Lichterman's argument about the

individualization of secular activism, this pursuit is directly linked to a sense of self-fulfillment where activism and solidarity around issues of common concern is also importantly coupled with spiritual growth. Thus, people who are trying to "realize themselves, actualize themselves, as personal agents of social change both in activist organizations and everyday life" (Lichterman,1996, p. 3) can aid collective social movements. As the case of KAIROS illustrates, spiritual growth through activism has the capacity to evoke the same altruistic drive of attending to the welfare of others.

In sum, if Canadians are searching for spiritual meaning in a tumultuous world outside of traditional churches, KAIROS has created a site for this to occur where an opportunity structure and a rhetorical frame that are relevant have been developed. What the case study of KAIROS illustrates is that faith communities of activism are important sites for navigating a sense of self for those involved in social justice efforts. It is also a marginalized narrative about religion that complicates and nuances the larger theoretical conversation about religion that has ensued with the advent of a post-secular world.

CHAPTER FIVE:
CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper suggests that due to the postmodern turn, which encourages discernment around unhelpful metanarratives in the world, the deconstruction of religion within this process should not be exempt. While the majority of popular notions of religion continue to vacillate between fundamentalism and secularization, little room remains for examining the existence of deeper diversities within religious modalities. A small and highly fragmented body of literature remarking on this fact seems to be growing (Berger, 1999; Beyer, 2004 & 2006; Sampson, 2005; Taylor, 2004 & 2007). This fragmentation is in part due to the "Berlin Wall of disciplines" (Smille, 1982) which refers to the challenges that interdisciplinary efforts around the study of religion can face. Consequently these barriers are delaying important dialogue between religious studies departments, theological colleges as well as the broader social sciences and humanities.

Further, as Jane Sampson (2006) maintains, the new methods employed in postmodern investigation, namely discourse analysis, often continue to perpetuate the modernistic lens when applied to the study of religion even when it has successfully disengaged in other areas. As a consequence, religion continues to be viewed as either backwards and primitive (and therefore a characteristic of the Global South) or ultimately irrelevant through the advent of progress, an assumption intrinsically linked with the development project. Here it becomes evident just how crucial engaging the development field in this discussion is.

As demonstrated in this thesis, Farokh Afshar (2005), writing from the development field inadvertently offers a tentative solution to this problem. His notion of "centering development" factors heavily into reframing the field both within theory and practice providing an opportunity to resituate religion in a textured manner. In conceptualizing development in a way that challenges the present view which regards the North as developed in relation to the so-called underdeveloped South, he also makes room for breaking the existing binary between a secular North and a religious South. This dualism presently exists in development literature on religion. While these writers provide a much needed entry point to assess religion as important to development, they often do so

in a process of 'othering' and thus continue to perpetuate paternalistic models. Hence, situated within these larger trends and questions, this study demonstrates a move beyond these assumed dichotomies, namely of faith and religion as primarily expressions of the South through an investigation of the interface of faith and the global development project in the North.

In the spirit of deconstructing modernity and its subsequent project, development, capacities of resistance have been explored through an in-depth look at KAIROS. This choice is supported by scholars such as Pierce and Kowalchuk (2005) who observe that with few exceptions, religious beliefs have largely been overlooked and sometimes even dismissed as a force that motivates participation in progressive social movements or politics. Also, in light of the above mentioned trends, important questions are arising today within a globalized world where the post 9/11 era has sparked shifting identities within individuals, communities and countries on planet that is often characterized as uncertain and volatile both socially and environmentally. In the midst of this ever changing global landscape, religious and faith expressions are shifting in response in a variety of complex and often confusing ways, with the starkest illustration being religious extremism. Of course, these altering religious realities are not easily grouped into the limited categories presently offered. Through a deeper, more complex analysis of religion, space needs to be constructed that allows for sitting with the perplexing and often uncomfortable paradoxes that exist.

For this reason, it is crucial not to disregard the individual narratives that are counter to existing metadiscourses. Engaging with these stories is perhaps one of the most important ways of contesting dominant narratives by providing in-depth investigations of other realities. The study of KAIROS seeks to fill this gap in a way that provides insight beyond an anecdotal example while supporting the broader theoretical argument that has been constructed. As Tierney (2000) articulates eloquently:

> [Narrative] histories are helpful not merely because they add to the mix of what already exists, but because of their ability to refashion identities. Rather than a conservative goal based on nostalgia for a paradise lost, or a liberal one of enabling more people to take their places at humanity's table, a goal of life history work in a postmodern age is to break the strangle-hold of metanarratives that establishes

> rules of truth, legitimacy, and identity. The work of life history becomes the investigation of the mediating aspects of culture, the interrogation of its grammar, and the decentering of its norms. (quoted in Denzin & Lincoln 2005, p. 668)

Accordingly, my findings reveal how some faith spaces in the North are articulating faith and resistance in ways that go against the grain of dominant cultural narratives. Further, the research suggests just how important a site they can be in identity navigation due to the current global context and its subsequent local impacts.

To clarify, this study has not been an attempt to assess whether or not KAIROS is a 'successful' organization. Again, my intention has been to explore why faith spaces of activism are important sites in the North. Therefore, I have intentionally excluded any discussion of KAIROS' perceived strengths and weaknesses. For instance, KAIROS' position as a central player in successfully lobbying the government around the corporate social responsibility of Canadian mining companies in the Global South, is an achievement with wide reaching impacts that went unmentioned. On the other end, the significance of emerging Evangelical groups with similar goals, such as the Micah Challenge, was not discussed in relation to KAIROS either.

Shifting focus, a number of unique outcomes surfaced throughout the study around civil society and notions of resistance to economic globalization. Through an exploration of the KAIROS rhetorical framework, it became evident that individuals and communities find a sense of meaning and support through linking their present actions within a narrative of similar Christian efforts threaded through history. As suggested, this demonstrates the capacities of churches and faith communities to motivate and sustain momentum around issues they find relevant even in relation to secular movements which can have a shorter shelf life. Within the Northern context that includes individualism, faith communities of resistance can also provide the collective support needed behind efforts that seek to redefine reality as well as disrupt and change political structures. For some, a faith language resonates and unites in a way that allows for a clear naming of grievances which in turn reinvigorates faith. What this suggests is that faith communities could, and are, potentially contributing to larger movements of resistance.

A number of other unexpected themes surfaced from the narratives collected. First, in a culture defined largely by individualism, where declining churches are considered archaic remnants of a previous time, KAIROS emerges as a contemporary religious space. Although connected through a shared sense of faith, the stories of individual KAIROS members demonstrate just how personal a spiritual journey they are on through their activism. Motifs of spiritual growth and self-betterment were expressed in ways that challenge understandings of individualism as only an encumbrance to efforts for the common good.

Second, the research on KAIROS uncovered currents that may aid in further understanding the present Canadian religious landscape. As Reginald Bibby argues, while traditional churches may be on the decline, evidence of a consistent belief in God may indicate that individuals are expressing their faith outside of their home congregations and parishes. This is suggested as due to a lack of contemporary relevance in how faith is framed within traditional church circles. KAIROS is one of these alternative spaces for faith expression that is still rooted within the long standing denominational frameworks, supporting the notion of this unlikely "religious renaissance", which marks the recognition of a post-secular world. Despite this, a word of caution is necessary because although KAIROS represents a current in faith beyond its boundaries, it is still a minority expression and is just one of the myriad of religious framings developing that speak to the relevance of a globalized world.

In sum, my research supports the following objectives. First, it aimed to answer the call put forward by Sampson that requests a more nuanced acknowledgement of religion within postmodern discourse analysis. Second, it sought to further the interface between religion and development as it is perceived in the field of international development studies by supporting "centering" development. Through dismantling the myth of western style modernity it has attempted to demonstrate how this lens manifests in a dichotomous view of a secular North and a religious South. In a small way I hope this contributes freshness to the continuous dialogue and reflexivity that is occurring around removing paternalistic development models and approaches. Third, and more broadly, it supported Charles Taylor's view that through the deconstruction of present narratives on religion, positive work on building mutual understanding in a contemporary world with

its corresponding malaises can occur. As he suggests, it is through the unpacking of grand social imaginaries that local particularities most clearly emerge, ultimately aiding in navigating the larger realities of contemporary religious expressions.

Of course no study is complete without a cautionary tale or two and a number of limitations must be highlighted. By undertaking a qualitative investigation of lived experiences at the individual and organizational level, this study has supported the agenda of presenting a divergent narrative of religion in the North. Nevertheless the small sample size, due to various factors that were unavoidable in the available time frame as well as by limited funding, cannot be representative of all experiences of faith activists either within KAIROS or elsewhere, nor should they be taken as such. Although KAIROS was strategically chosen as an organization that is both national and local, as well as internationally involved, this thesis does not claim that it stands for all sites of alternative religious narratives in Canada or elsewhere. However, it does indicate that such sites exist.

Specifically, and less directly related to this thesis, further quantitative research could be conducted on KAIROS to help illuminate the shifting context of the Canadian religious landscape. Also, a look at KAIROS' strategic dimension could give a more concrete picture as to how it is received within the broader environment it participates within. In relation to development studies, additional research needs to take place in the following areas. Chiefly, analyses that move away from the North as the site of agency to include the South more directly would be useful. For instance, narrative inquiry around how KAIROS' partnered communities in the South are responding, engaging or resisting KAIROS initiatives would further thicken the story.

To conclude, it is spaces that encourage diversity, ambiguity and contradiction that are desperately needed in a world of narrow cultural stories, one where curiosities can emerge, be noted and maybe even resonate in the margins.

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in relation to their faith and affiliation with KAIROS as well as perspectives and opinions regarding the broader themes present in the study. As a participant, you will be asked if you are comfortable having your interview tape recorded. If this makes you uncomfortable you can choose not to have it recorded. Notes will be taking during the interview. **The tapes will be destroyed after transcription and the transcribed data and notes will be kept securely for a period of 5 years post-publication.**

Who Can Participate In This Study?
You can participate in this study if you are staff, a member or a volunteer affiliated with KAIROS. Participants will be either male or female, and over the age of 18.

Who Will Do The Research?
This research will be carried out by Gabrielle Donnelly, a Master of Arts student at Dalhousie University, Halifax, Canada.

What Will You Be Asked To Do?
The interview will take about 1 hour. You will be asked to answer a series of open ended interview questions related to faith, activism, social and ecological justice issues and the role of KAIROS. The interviews will take place in a predetermined location.

Possible Risks and Discomforts
The interview poses no perceived risks to you as the participant. Nevertheless, you can choose to not answer questions and/or end the interview at any time. The researcher will make every effort to conduct the interviews in a private location and to maintain confidentiality and anonymity of those interviewed. No names or identifying information will be included in the final findings. The notes and tape recording will be kept in a secure location, only accessible to the researcher.

It is important to acknowledge that because the interviews are being recorded there is the possibility that your voice provides a direct link to your identity. Again, the tapes will be kept secure **until they are destroyed** and there is minimal risk that your tapes will be accessed by anyone other than the researcher.

Possible Benefits
Your participation offers you an opportunity to reflect upon emerging forms of faith-based activism and the direction of KAIROS as an organization. The reach of your contributions will be limited to personal satisfaction via participation and contribution to the researcher's graduate thesis.

New Information
You will be informed if there are any changes to the research study which might affect your decision to participate.